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# **Soviet Youth**

**Twelve Komsomol Histories**

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Edited by  
NIKOLAI K. NOVAK-DEKER

Translation edited by  
OLIVER J. FREDERIKSEN

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## Foreword

Many books on the Soviet Union have been published in the outside world in recent years. A variety of monographs, symposiums, and handbooks have thrown light on different aspects of Soviet life, but the emphasis has been very uneven. More attention has been paid, for instance, to the Soviet economy than to such questions of great current interest as science and education.

One greatly neglected subject has been the Komsomol, the All-Union Lenin Young Communist League, in spite of its immense importance in the lives of young men and women of the Soviet Union. It constitutes a vast army of Soviet citizens, in 1958 numbering 18 million members.

The present collection is intended to illuminate this area. It will be, we hope, of great interest to the reader in revealing what the Soviet dictatorship uses the Komsomol to achieve, and how the Komsomol affects the minds, the emotions, the lives and behavior of its members. In this collection, the stories of twelve former Komsomol members, who came from various national and social backgrounds and were in the Komsomol at different times, are told with simplicity and with candor.

The editors of the collection asked the authors to recall their experiences as honestly and as frankly as possible in order to show how they understood the Komsomol at the time they were in it, rather than how they understand it today. The authors were asked to tell, simply and clearly and in chronological order, all they could remember of their own personal experiences in the Komsomol, how their feelings changed and what they went through, in order to disclose the attitude of its members toward the organization and the effect of the organization on its members.

In addition to the histories of these twelve former members, a brief history of the Komsomol organization itself is included as an introductory chapter. The author of this first chapter, Abdurakhman Avtorkhanov, who has also written extensively under the names of Alexander Uralov and A. Kunta, was born in 1908 in Grozny, in the Chechen area of the North Caucasus. As a student in the Institute for Training Red Professors, he acquired considerable fame as author of a highly controversial article in *Pravda* in 1930 on the nationality problem. He was graduated from the Institute in 1937. In the Soviet Union he wrote a number of studies on the history of the Revolution in the North Caucasus. After emigration he continued his work as a historian, becoming well known as a prolific author of highly authoritative studies of the USSR dealing with general or specific subjects.

Petr Pavlovich Kruzhin was responsible for inviting the various authors to contribute their histories, for assisting them in their work, and for seeing their manuscripts through the initial editorial stages. He was born in 1921, was graduated from secondary school in 1939, entered a military academy from which he was graduated in 1941, and was in command of a front-line unit until he was taken prisoner in the spring of 1942. In the USSR, he was an active member of the Komsomol which he joined in 1936, a member of a raion committee in 1939 and a buro member of his battalion's Komsomol organization in 1939 and 1940. He was active in public relations in the Vlasovite movement from February of 1943, and has written a number of works on political subjects and the activities of young people.

The editors wish to express their sincere gratitude to these two scholars, as well as to all the authors of the Komsomol histories.

Thanks are also due Professor Ralph T. Fisher, Jr., University of Illinois, for advice and assistance at various stages of the project.

*Nikolai K. Novak-Deker*



## A Brief History of the Komsomol

Any revolution is an explosion of youth, and the most active participation of the younger generation is independent of the political plans of the leaders. Such was the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. Its immediate military organizers in Petrograd were under thirty, its senior political leaders were about thirty, and only Lenin himself was over forty.

The same is true of the Civil War which followed the Revolution. In this war, the old Russia and the new opposed each other not only spiritually but also physically. The leaders of the White Army were tsarist generals, old men of up to sixty and above, while the Red Army was commanded by lieutenants, non-commissioned officers, and, in many cases, simply young civilians. Marshal Tukhachevsky commanded an army at the age of twenty-five and a front (against Denikin, and later against Pilsudski) at twenty-seven. Commander Uborevich was in charge of an army at the age of twenty-two, while Commander Fedko was in charge of an army and a front at twenty-one. These and other leaders of the Red Army were shot in the Great Purge of 1937-39. The regiments and divisions of the Red Army were completely under the command of people of this Komsomol age, and, nevertheless, the Red Army was victorious. How did this happen; what was the military secret?

The secret was that youth was victorious. The boldness of youth, the desire to do daring deeds, the thirst for adventure, and stupid sacrifice in the name of equally stupid and abstract ideals—these were the characteristics of the young people of the Revolution. The young people in the Komsomol during the Revolution and the Civil War were like this. These qualities, used by Bolshevik propaganda, accomplished what the Bolsheviks themselves later called “revolutionary wonders.” Thus, when, during the Civil War, one often saw on the Komsomol buildings a sign reading: “Raikom closed. Komsomol members have left for the front,” it was not simply a propaganda trick. Masses of Komsomol members did, in fact, leave the towns for the front in order to fight “against the bourgeoisie,” for the power of the workers, and “for the Third International,” as well as the rural areas to fight “against the landowners” and “for land, freedom and a fair deal.”

All Komsomol members over the age of sixteen were mobilized by the Komsomol committees themselves. These were genuine volunteers, since the Komsomol only mobilized those who were not liable to be drafted into the army. The first mobilization was declared by the Second Komsomol Congress, which stated: “To defend the Republic and to service the front and rear of the Red Army, league members over sixteen will be mobilized.”<sup>1</sup> N. Ostrovsky, the well-known

<sup>1</sup> *Molodoi kommunist*, No. 11, 1957, p. 75.

Komsomol writer and author of *How The Steel Was Tempered*, wrote that "with the Komsomol card we received a rifle and 200 rounds of ammunition."<sup>2</sup> Those who refused to go to the front simply handed in their Komsomol card. However, there were few such refusals, for such people were ostracized and called cowards and deserters of the Revolution. All the Komsomol members in provinces at the front went to the front, and the Komsomol organizations in those provinces at the rear sent as many as 50 percent of their members to the front. However, even from these provinces statements were frequently made by volunteers. In one of these statements we read: "We are still young, being only fifteen, sixteen, and seventeen years old, but we have been seized with the flame of the struggle against the White parasites and we are ready to go into battle at once."<sup>3</sup>

The old Bolsheviks themselves were most encouraged by the success of their propaganda among the Komsomol members. For example, Kirov said: "Even those of us who were then at the front remember what a colossal, I should say exceptional, role the Komsomol played at that time. It should be said straight out, Comrades, that we Bolsheviks, broadly speaking, are people who know how to fight, without sparing our lives, and at times we 'envied' the heroes produced by the Komsomol at that time."<sup>4</sup>

The Bolshevik Party was the only political party in Russia which from the very beginning of the Revolution tried to bring young workers, soldiers and students under the wing of the Party both politically and organizationally. Neutral, non-political organizations did not exist for the Bolsheviks. Lenin wrote at the time: "The young people who are students and to an even greater extent the young people who are workers will decide the outcome of the entire struggle."<sup>5</sup> The youth organization was to serve the same purpose as the Party itself. On the eve of the October Revolution, at the Sixth Party Congress (August 1917), the question of "youth organizations" was specifically discussed. N. Bukharin made a report. A resolution passed on the basis of his report pointed out that when the "direct battle for socialism" began (the question under discussion was preparation for an armed Bolshevik revolt), the Party should pay "the maximum of attention" to the creation of revolutionary, Bolshevik youth organizations.<sup>6</sup>

However, the Bolsheviks only succeeded in creating a centralized, Communist youth organization a year after their victory, in October 1918. Before this there were various revolutionary youth organizations in existence, including those connected with the Mensheviks, the Social Revolutionaries and the Anarchists, or "neutrals." This is borne out by the multitude of names of youth organizations which existed before the creation of the Young Communist League

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>5</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Sochineniya* (Works), 4th ed., Moscow, 1947, Vol. VIII, p. 124.

<sup>6</sup> *Kommunisticheskaya partiya Sovetskogo Soyuza v rezolyutsiakh i resheniyakh sezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK, 1898—1954* (The Communist Party of the Soviet Union in Resolutions and Decisions of Congresses, Conferences, and Plenums of the Central Committee, 1898—1954), 7th ed., Part I, Moscow, 1954, p. 386

of Russia (RKSM): "The Socialist League of Working Youth," "The League of Working Youth—the Third International," "The Peasant Socialist League of Youth," "The League of Peasant Youth—the Third International," "The League of Youth," "The New Student," "The Awakening." But not one of the youth organizations, not even one of those protected by the Bolsheviks, wanted to be called "Communist," despite the fact that from the beginning of 1918 the Bolsheviks called themselves Communists and not socialists. "The dirty old shirt must be thrown away," wrote Lenin about the name "social-democrat" or "socialist" in his *April Theses* of 1917, but the young people zealously put it on.

The Young Communist League of Russia (abbreviated to RKSM or Komsomol) was created at the First Congress of Working and Peasant Youth, held in Moscow from October 29 to November 4, 1918. The congress was attended by 176 delegates from those youth organizations which were under the control of the Bolshevik Party, while only those considered Bolshevik sympathizers were personally invited from the non-Bolshevik organizations.

However, the answers which the delegates gave in a questionnaire at the congress itself in reply to the question "To what party do you belong or with which party do you sympathize?" were far from identical: 88 answered that they were Communists, 45 stated that they were "non-party" (which, in the particular circumstances, meant that they did not sympathize with the Communists), 38 were "in sympathy with" the Soviet government, 3 were social-democrats, one was a social-revolutionary and one an "anarchist-individualist."<sup>7</sup> Even the congress resolution on the name of the youth organization was not adopted unanimously. There were six votes opposed and 17 in favor. The resolution that "the new league should be independent" of the Bolshevik Party was passed unanimously.<sup>8</sup>

It was not long before this resolution by the First Komsomol Congress was revoked by the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party. In August 1919, the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party and the apparatus of the Central Committee of the RKSM, which was in its power, issued a joint decree stating: "The Central Committee of the RKSM is immediately subordinate to the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party, and the local organizations of the RKSM are under the control of the local committees."<sup>9</sup> They did not find it easy to carry out this resolution immediately. The Central Committee of the Komsomol contained people from among the organizers of the RKSM who stubbornly and most firmly opposed the liquidation of the independent youth organization. The members of the Central Committee and the leading Komsomol workers Dunayevsky, Polifem, and Yakovlev belonged to such a group. When this group became convinced that it was no longer possible to save the independence of the Komsomol, it tried to organize a new "League of Soviet

<sup>7</sup> *Bolshaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya* (Large Soviet Encyclopedia), 1st ed., Vol. XI, Moscow, 1930, p. 640.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 640—41.

<sup>9</sup> *KPSS o komsomole i molodezhi* (The Communist Party of the Soviet Union on the Komsomol and Youth), Moscow, 1957, col. 36.

Working Youth" and to set up special "youth sections" in the trade unions for the protection of the interests of the "working youth of Russia."<sup>10</sup> The attitude of Dunayevsky's group was condemned in a decree of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party in September 1920 as anti-party activity and "youthful syndicalism." The members of the group were removed from their posts in the Komsomol Central Committee (behind the back of, and without consultation with, the Komsomol) and Dunayevsky himself, as the leader of the group, was expelled from the Party. However, opposition to this in the RKSM had not been eradicated. On the eve of the Third Komsomol Congress in 1920, the opposition spoke out even more firmly for the independence of the youth organizations and against the transformation of the Komsomol into a bureaucratic subsidiary of the Party.

Purely national Communist opposition also sprang up in the Komsomol. The most influential politically and numerically was the Ukrainian. It was called the "Hereditary Proletarian Organization—the Donbas Komsomol." The Ukrainian Komsomol opposition made two demands: that the Ukrainian Komsomol should be independent of the RKSM and that the Komsomol should be independent of the Party.<sup>11</sup> As in the Party itself, the fate of all opposition members in the RKSM was decided in advance by the Party apparatus—some were expelled from the Party and the Komsomol, some were removed from their posts, and some were deported to remote provinces.

The victory of the Party apparatus over the Komsomol killed the inner dynamism which had until then made it great and important. This was also a distinctive feature of the crisis within the Komsomol—the loss of faith in Communist ideals, the resultant mass exodus from the Komsomol, the transformation of former revolutionaries into "kind-hearted burghers," the flight from politics into everyday life, the growth of drunkenness, hooliganism, the expression of pessimism, until, finally, the famous *Yeseninshchina*. Yesenin of the anti-Communist lyrics, the "kulak poet," the author of *Moscow With its Bars* and *A Hooligan's Confession*, Yesenin, who wrote with great grief about the old Russia which had perished at the hands of the Bolsheviks, Yesenin, the romantic of the Russia of yesterday, became the poetic prophet, the rebel carrying the banner of the young people who were disillusioned with Communism. This crisis in the Komsomol during the twenties is excellently indicated by the data concerning the growth of the Komsomol during those years. According to the first edition of the *Large Soviet Encyclopedia* (Volume XI, 1930, page 643), membership was 22,000 in 1918, 90,000 in 1919, 400,000 in 1920, 400,000 in 1921, 247,000 in 1922, and 284,000 in 1923. It is interesting to note that the second edition in its article on the Komsomol (Volume IX, 1951, pages 335—336) gives no data at all for 1922 and a falsified figure of 700,000 for 1923.

Thus, in 1920 and 1921, those years in which the Civil War ended triumphantly for the Communists, the flow of new members into the Komsomol

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>11</sup> *Bolshaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya* (Large Soviet Encyclopedia), 1st ed., Vol. XI, Moscow, 1930, p. 647.

stopped temporarily, and by a year later, in 1922, about one-third of its members (more than 150,000) had left the organization. This was the answer of idealistic Komsomol members to the subordination of the Komsomol to the Party apparatus. The majority of these were those Komsomol members who "with the Komsomol card received a rifle and 200 rounds of ammunition." Those social processes which were going on in the Party and in the country also influenced the crisis.

The former party of revolutionaries, having come to power and wiped out the old ruling classes, itself began to be transformed into a new ruling class, but a greedier, crueller, and less discriminating one in its methods of exploitation and government. The proletariat now had new masters, but the yoke remained the same. The peasants now owned the land, but the grain was harvested by the state. All those civic liberties provided by the February Revolution had been utterly destroyed. The Party, which at one time had written on its banners the most all-embracing political liberties, social equality and an implacable struggle against all forms of tyranny and arbitrariness, began to rule the country not on the basis of the popular, not even the "proletariat," will, but simply at its own discretion and in its own interests alone. The sailors of the Baltic Fleet, whom Lenin had called "the pride of the Revolution" and who had really put him in power, now rose up against him. This brought about the famous Kronstadt rebellion of 1921, in which Communists and Komsomol members took part. The rebellion was not directed against the Soviet government. The slogan of the rebellion was: "The Soviets Without the Communists." In the social and political meaning of this slogan Lenin saw the greatest potential danger to Communist rule. The cruelty used in the suppression of the rebellion itself was all the greater. Nevertheless, the rebellion forced the Bolshevik Party to bring out NEP—the New Economic Policy. This was the first defeat of the theoretical doctrine of Communism, admitted by Lenin himself. Private capital had to be permitted in the country, in addition to state capital. The Communist promise of "heaven on earth" turned out to be so many empty words. All this also effected the ideological discord and disintegration of the old, revolutionary Komsomol.

In the years of inter-party discussions, the politically informed part of the Komsomol invariably sided with the opposition, the first time being with Trotsky's leftist opposition in 1923–24. Trotsky was the first person in the Party to divine the "secret" of Stalin's organizational plan; to place the apparatus under the control of the Party. Trotsky argued that the goal of the Stalinists was not an ideologically informed party, but "passive obedience," "mechanical levelling-out according to the leadership" and a "centralized apparatus." "Despite the ideological growth of the Party, the Party apparatus continued stubbornly to think and to decide for it;" "the Party must subordinate its apparatus to itself," wrote Trotsky in the pamphlet *The New Course*. Trotsky thought that only young Party members could succeed in correcting this line of having the apparatus dictate to the Party. Hence Trotsky's slogan: "The young people are the true barometer of the Party." Trotsky expected particularly great things from the students. "The multifarious nature of the student youth," wrote Trotsky, "recruited from all strata and

substrata of Soviet society, reflects all our plusses and minuses, and we would be fools if we did not pay very close attention to its tendencies. . . . It is quite useless for the most zealous apparatchiks to criticize the young people now. They are our check and our replacement, and tomorrow belongs to them." During his argument with the triumvirate (Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev) Trotsky had the greatest success among young people, in particular among students. For example, in a Party poll in Moscow (December 1923 and January 1924), out of 72 Party cells in the higher schools of the capital, 52 (2,790 voters) were in favor of the Central Committee, and 40 (6,594 voters) were opposed.<sup>12</sup> The picture was roughly the same in the rural areas. It could have been absolutely catastrophic for the Central Committee apparatus, if the Komsomol and the Party had known that in the Central Committee safe lay the "Political Testament" of the dying Lenin, which contained the demand that Stalin should be immediately removed from his position as secretary-general of the Central Committee for "coarseness, disloyalty and capriciousness."

Such were the political factors influencing the deepening of the ideological split, the organizational weakening, and the psychological crisis in the ranks of the Komsomol. Making use of Lenin's fatal illness, the Thirteenth Party Conference, under the leadership of the "triumvirate," censured Trotsky and the young Party members. At the Thirteenth Party Congress in 1924, after the death of Lenin, this censure was repeated, and from then on preaching Trotsky's point of view was considered incompatible with Party membership. In reply to the conduct of the student Party members, the Thirteenth Party Conference decreed that "entry into the Party should be closed to all non-proletarian elements," students being considered "non-proletarian elements."<sup>13</sup> Soon reprisals were carried out and students who had voted for the opposition began to be expelled from the higher schools in vast numbers, regardless of what services they may have rendered in the Civil War. At the same time, there was an attempt to make the Komsomol internally "imposing," revolutionary," and "international." For this purpose, at the Fourth Komsomol Congress in 1924, the Komsomol appropriated the name of Lenin, and became the Russian Lenin Young Communist League (RLKSM). At the Seventh Congress in March 1926 the word "Russian" was replaced by the word "All-Union," and the present name of the Komsomol was adopted: the All-Union Lenin Young Communist League.

The second opposition within the Party in which the Komsomol participated was the "new opposition" of Zinoviev and Kamenev in 1925. The main base of both the Party and the Komsomol opposition was in Leningrad.

Having censured Trotsky and the young people who were in sympathy with him, and using to this end the supporters of Zinoviev, Stalin now began to prepare the liquidation of the "secondary" enemies, the supporters of Zinoviev.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 499.

<sup>13</sup> *Kommunisticheskaya partiya Sovetskogo Soyuza v rezolyutsiakh i resheniyakh sezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK, 1898—1954* (The Communist Party of the Soviet Union in Resolutions and Decisions of Congresses, Conferences, and Plenums of the Central Committee, 1898—1954), 7th ed., Part I, Moscow, 1954, p. 783.



The Zinoviev supporters replied by organizing a new opposition movement. At the Fourteenth Party Congress, Zinoviev read a joint political report against Stalin and his apparatus (the accusations against Stalin were basically the same as those made by Trotsky). Zinoviev and Kamenev were supported by the whole of the Komsomol organization of Leningrad. The Leningrad Komsomol also brought its own accusations against the Stalinist apparatus of the Party Central Committee and the Komsomol Central Committee. The Leningrad representatives spoke about "the rebirth of the Komsomol," "the surrender of the October attitudes by the Komsomol," and about the necessity of creating "equality between the Party and the Komsomol." It is interesting that one of those few Leningrad Komsomol workers who remained faithful to Stalin and spoke against Zinoviev was also a member of the Leningrad Province Komsomol Committee, Leonid Nikolayev, the future murderer of a member of the Politburo, Sergei Kirov. The Komsomol opposition, as well as the Party opposition of Zinoviev, was smashed. The entire Leningrad Provincial Komsomol Committee was dissolved (during the trial of Nikolayev in 1935 all the Komsomol leaders at that time were shot). Thus ends the first stage in the history of the Komsomol, the history of the revolutionary political Komsomol. Here the second stage begins, the history of the Stalinist "routine" Komsomol. This second stage exactly coincides with Stalin's triumphant creation of a one-man dictatorship.

From that time on, the Komsomol was no longer concerned with politics. Politics were a Party matter, or, rather, a Party apparatus matter. The Komsomol was reduced to a "Party reserve, Party assistant," an instrument in the hands of the Party apparatus for the spiritual subjugation of Soviet youth. The Komsomol was given new, more utilitarian tasks; it had to execute the Party's economic resolutions and educate the young people in Communism. Ardor for industrialization, exploits on the labor front and heroism in the exploitation of new regions were what the Party was now preaching in the Komsomol. The Party apparatus cultivated "socialist" labor as "a matter of honor, a matter of glory, a matter of virtue and heroism," according to Stalin's definition; but all this was of course done in the name of the "building of socialism," even if only in one country. At the same time the young people were also called upon to study. Lenin's slogan at the Third Komsomol Congress, "study, study, and again study," was taken over as one of the major slogans. Rapid industrialization required not only people who were literate, but specialists in various branches of technology as well. So Stalin brought out a new slogan: "In the period of reconstruction, technology decides everything; the Bolsheviks must master technology." The system of technical schools was enlarged and the number of admissions and state grants increased. The Komsomol found an outlet for its energy in all new undertakings; new buildings, the exploitation of new regions, and the construction of new towns, in instruction in schools, in rural "cultural campaigns" to eradicate illiteracy among the peasantry, and in "shock-work" and "competition" in the fulfillment of educational and industrial plans. The Bolsheviks successfully indoctrinated the Komsomol members with zeal for "new construction" and "heroism in labor." The Stakhanovite movement was more than just

a compulsory system of forced labor, and it was no coincidence that it was born in honor of the international Day of Youth in the youth section of the Tsentralnoye Irmino mine in the Don Basin. The successes of the Bolsheviks in this field are also mentioned in the histories of former Komsomol members, published in this collection.

Along with the tasks which the Stalinist apparatus presented to the Komsomol, its numbers also grew. The Seventh Komsomol Congress in 1926 asked for "one hundred percent membership of the working youth in the Komsomol." The same task was also given to the youth of the poorer peasantry in rural areas; children of middle-class peasants were accepted with great discrimination, while the children of kulaks or former kulaks were not permitted to join.

The growth of the Komsomol during the forty years of its existence can be seen in the following membership figures: 1918, 22,000; 1919, 90,000; 1920, 400,000; 1921, 400,000; 1922, 247,000; 1923, 284,000; 1924, 406,000; 1925, 520,000; 1926, 890,000; 1927, 1,055,000; 1928, 2,000,000; 1931, 3,000,000; 1936, 4,000,000; 1949, 9,300,000; 1954, 18,825,000; 1958, 18,000,000. (See the *Large Soviet Encyclopedia*, first edition, Volume XI, page 643, and second edition, Volume IX, pages 337-47, as well as the discussion of the Twelfth Komsomol Congress in *Komsomolskaya pravda*, March, 1954, and the discussion of the Thirteenth Komsomol Congress in *Komsomolskaya pravda*, April 16, 1958.)

During the first five-year plans, the Komsomol, following the example of the Civil War, mobilized its members for the construction of new factories in the Urals and Siberia, for cutting and processing timber in the North, for work in the Donbas mines, in the Far East, where the new town of Komsomolsk-on-Amur was being built, and for work in the Moscow Metro. Even where the Stalin regime was most hated, in rural areas, the Komsomol had its heroes: Marya Demchenko, Pasha Angelina, Konstantin Borin. The "education campaign" was also successful. During the First and Second Five-Year Plans, 118,000 engineers, and technicians, 69,000 agricultural specialists, 800 doctors, and 91,000 teachers were trained from the ranks of the Komsomol and other young people.<sup>14</sup> At present there are 500,000 engineers and technicians and 85,000 agricultural experts and technicians. A total of 97 percent of Komsomol activists are reported to have a higher or secondary education.<sup>15</sup>

During Stalin's struggle against the opposition and during the first five-year plans, the Komsomol was headed by its secretaries-general; N. Chaplin, A. Milchakov, and A. Kosarev in succession. Stalin could thank these persons and their assistants in the Komsomol Central Committee that the Komsomol did not become merely an obedient instrument in the hands of the Party apparatus, but was also that "reservist school" from which this apparatus drew its most faithful new-style functionaries, the obedient executors of the will of the apparatus. Classic representatives of this type are the present "honorary members" of the Komsomol, the former secretaries-general of the second enrollment, N. Mikhailov, A. Shelepin and V. Semichastny.

<sup>14</sup> *Spravochnik komsomolskogo propagandista* (Komsomol Propagandist's Handbook), Moscow, 1955, pp. 86, 88. Hereafter cited as "Komsomol Propagandist's Handbook."

<sup>15</sup> *Komsomolskaya pravda*, April 6, 1958.

Kosarev and his Komsomol Central Committee did a particularly great deal of work for Stalin. All new undertakings, all new mobilizations for "the great construction of socialism," "the Stakhanovite movement," the "culture campaign," the collectivization campaign, and the setting-up of kolkhozes (in 1929-30 Komsomol members set up 5,000 kolkhozes and 93 percent of all rural Komsomol members were in kolkhozes).<sup>16</sup> The Party put all this burden on the young people, on the physically strong shoulders of its "assistant," the Komsomol, while Kosarev sincerely and fanatically helped Stalin harness the Komsomol and the younger generation as a whole to the "building of socialism." Even Stalin realized the value of the work which Kosarev did. At the Seventeenth Party Congress in 1934 Kosarev was not only elected a member of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, but was also inducted as a member of the Central Committee Orgburo. Stalin rewarded Kosarev for his work the second time in November 1938, when a special Komsomol Central Committee was convened, presided over by Stalin, at which all the members of the secretariat and buro of the Komsomol Central Committee, headed by Kosarev, were arrested as "enemies of the people." The *Large Soviet Encyclopedia*, second edition, Volume IX, page 339, indicates that under Stalin's direction this plenum "expelled traitors and schismatics who had penetrated the Komsomol." The "traitors and schismatics" were not simply expelled. They were thrown into NKVD cellars as "spies, saboteurs and terrorists." Thus took place the "case of the Kosarev group," which also included the Komsomol secretaries Lukyanov, Gorshenin, Feinberg, Vershkov, and Vasilieva. Former Komsomol "secretaries-general" were also arrested—Chaplin and Milchanov, the leaders of the Communist International—Shatskin, Chemodanov, and Lominadze. After prolonged physical torture, both Kosarev and the members of his group were shot. Khrushchev reported this at the Twentieth Party Congress with much knowledge of the matter. By some miracle Milchanov was the only Komsomol member who did not lose his life and was released from a concentration camp after 20 years. At the Thirteenth Komsomol Congress A. Shelepin officially rehabilitated Kosarev and his "group" in a lengthy report. Shelepin stated: "When talking about education, one should also not forget the harm which the personality cult has done. For a long time, the younger generation was educated on books, films and plays permeated with the personality cult. . . . Great damage was done to the Komsomol when the so-called Kosarev case was fabricated. As has been established here, there was no foundation for this."<sup>17</sup> The purge in the Komsomol was not limited to one center alone. Both in Moscow and in all the Union republics, autonomous republics, all the oblasts and krais, all the outstanding personalities (secretaries, buro members) were arrested. One and the same accusation was made against all the arrested Komsomol groups: "the preparation of terrorist activities against the leaders of the Party and the government." All this sprang from the shooting of Kirov by Leonid Nikolayev, a former Komsomol worker. There were obviously no

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<sup>16</sup> *Molodoi kommunist*, No. 11, 1957, p. 75.

<sup>17</sup> *Komsomolskaya pravda*, April 16, 1958.

Nikolayevs among those thousands of arrested Komsomol leaders, but Stalin probably thought that every Komsomol activist was a potential terrorist.

The second stage in the history of the Komsomol thus ended in the complete removal of the leaders in the central and in the local areas. The organized removal of the Komsomol leaders and their replacement by completely new, young people, inexperienced, but, in place of this, more devoted to the "great genius, the wise teacher and good father," was accompanied by a deep psychological crisis within the Komsomol, particularly among the students, which is most eloquently dealt with in the histories of former Komsomol members published in this collection.

This was the situation in the Komsomol and in the country when Hitler declared war on the USSR. The first few months of the war showed how Stalin's system was hated, particularly by the younger generation. The Red Army, consisting of practically 70 percent Komsomol members and Communists, was well-armed (according to the German General Guderian, the Soviet tanks were bigger and better than the German ones), but decapitated by Stalin's purge, it did not want to fight for Stalin's government. Millions of Red Army men began to throw down their arms, going over to the side of the enemy or retreating into the interior of the country without offering any particular resistance. Within about three or four months the German army reached the environs of Moscow, and in the following year, 1942, took the North Caucasus and advanced to the Volga. It was not his own "wisdom" which Stalin had to thank for the fact that the Russian people turned against Hitler with such ferocity and sacrifice, but Hitler's lack of foresight, his cruel, anti-Russian, racial policy, the political organs in the areas occupied by the Germans, the mass, inhuman annihilation, and, mainly, the hunger of the prisoners-of-war. And here it was the young people who bore the main burden and made the greatest sacrifices. The main political errors Hitler made in directing the war were expertly used by Soviet propaganda. Ilya Ehrenburg wrote that "in Germany only the dogs and the unborn babies are innocent. Therefore, kill every German!" It is characteristic that the Soviet military propaganda machine not only intensively cultivated the hate of the Russian people toward Hitler's system as a "fascist system," but tried even harder to cultivate in the Russians a hate of the Germans as a people which was fascist through and through. So Soviet propaganda placed particular emphasis on the personal successes of Soviet terrorists and partisans at the enemy's rear and of Soviet snipers at the front. "During his short life, Sniper Smolyakov fired 126 rounds of ammunition, killing 125 fascists, Komsomolka Ludmilla Pavliuchenko killed 209 Hitlerites and Sniper Komsomolka Nina Onilova killed more than 2,000 enemy soldiers with her "Maxim." These are the characteristic phrases of Soviet propaganda, citing individual killing "records."<sup>18</sup> In short, Stalinist propaganda achieved its aim; Soviet young people showed that they could fight, even if it was the foreign "liberator" himself who forced them to do so.

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<sup>18</sup> "Komsomol Propagandist's Handbook," p. 99.

As in the years of the Civil War, Komsomol members were sent to the most dangerous theaters of war. However, the NKVD also used the Komsomol for the organization of terrorist, diversionist, saboteur, spy and partisan groups in the rear of the Germans. "Sixty percent of the partisan detachments consisted of young people. In the first two years of the Patriotic War alone, partisans killed 300,000 Hitlerites, blew up and burned 895 storage depots, destroyed 3,263 railroad and highway bridges. . . By September 1943, more than 1,300 Komsomol diversionist groups were in operation in the enemy communication lines."<sup>19</sup> The NKVD and the Soviet government also allotted these groups purely provocative tasks: the counter-measures of the Germans were consciously provoked by the murder of Germans in the streets of villages and towns and on the roads between them, in order to anger the people. This went even further. The partisan and diversionist groups had systematically to destroy the peasants' grain in order to bring about an artificial famine in occupied regions. The official source quoted openly admits this fact: a diversionary group in Nikolayev Oblast "distributed pamphlets and dug up fields of crops."<sup>20</sup> Another famous Molodaya Gvardiya (Young Guard) unit, described by the writer Fadeyev in the novel of the same name, in Krasnodon in the Donbas, was engaged in "burning grain, scattering livestock, and razing the labor exchange."<sup>21</sup> The exploits of the Komsomol, both purely military in defense of the country and purely criminal against even its own people behind the German lines, were highly appreciated by the government. More than 3,500,000 Komsomol members were decorated with orders and medals. Out of 11,000 Heroes of the Soviet Union, 7,000 are former Komsomol members. Among those who worked behind the German lines, 99 Komsomol members received the title of Hero of the Soviet Union and 50,000 were rewarded with orders and medals.<sup>22</sup> In 1945 the Komsomol organization as a whole was awarded a third Order of Lenin for its services in the war.

It should not be thought that they all became heroes and were decorated willingly. The Soviet government had ways of making heroes out of even the unwilling. One method was used at the front, in the foremost positions: when sending military units into routine attacks, the government also sent along "protective detachments" of NKVD troops to open machine-gun fire on soldiers who retreated. Not even unavoidable and justified retreat was permitted. The protocol on this question from the Komsomol assembly of the division of General Guriev has been preserved. A characteristic part of this record states: "*Question.* Is there an admissible reason for retreat from the firing position? *Answer.* Of all the mitigating reasons only one will be taken into consideration—death."<sup>23</sup> Another method was used in German-occupied territory. Reliable Chekists were placed at the head of all the partisan, espionage, and diversionist groups. These Chekists recruited people from the civilian population into their local subversive

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 101–02.

<sup>23</sup> *Molodoi kommunist*, No. 11, 1957, p. 77.

groups under the threat of death (frequently carried out) or of reprisals against families and relatives living in Soviet territory. This method also proved quite effective.

The rehabilitation by Soviet propaganda of the Russian historical heroes was also important—Nevsky, Suvorov, Kutuzov, and Nakhimov. For the same reasons the church was amnestied and those ecclesiastical figures still alive released. Under the same plan the Comintern was also dissolved. A Russian was supposed to think that not only was a just, defensive “Patriotic War” being waged, but also that when the war was won everything would be changed for the better. The NKVD would cease to exist, the kolkhozes would be abolished, and far-reaching civil liberties would be proclaimed in the country. The most surprising thing of all was that the NKVD arrested no one for spreading such rumors. That was probably “black propaganda” on the part of the same NKVD aimed at rallying the people against Germany from a moral and political point of view. The triumph of the peoples of the USSR over Germany was a triumph of Stalin’s system over these peoples. Only a few years after the victory Stalin began to prepare for a great new purge. There was the campaign against the “cosmopolitans and cringers,” the disgracing of prominent Soviet war leaders, the “Leningrad case,” and the “case of the Kremlin doctors.” The expected material improvements also did not come about. Heroes of the “Patriotic War,” cripples with numerous orders and medals, wandered over great areas of the country, begging alms in order to keep alive. The monthly pensions of the grateful government barely covered the modest cost of living for one week. This was the third stage in the history of the Komsomol.

After Stalin’s death there was a period of great expectations and of great hopes. For the first time since the twenties an awakening of interest in “big politics” became noticeable among the young people, particularly among the Komsomol members who were students. After the denunciation of Stalin at the Twentieth Congress, this interest in politics also began to take on certain active forms. For it was the young people in the Komsomol who took the denunciation of Stalin to be the beginning of a new era in the history of the country, the beginning of a liberalization by the regime in political and intellectual matters. It was the Komsomol writers who produced the first critical, “mutinous” works: Dudintsev—*Not By Bread Alone*, Yevtushenko—*Winter Station*, Granin—*A Particular Opinion*. In their books and literary works the young writers and critics began to demand more creative freedom, and some of them even openly renounced the famous “socialist method,” as the only creative method in Soviet literature. The chief editor of the leading literary journal *Novy mir*, K. Simonov himself, not only published Dudintsev’s novel, but also printed a very daring article criticizing both “socialist realism” and Stalin’s method of Party control over literature. Even harsher, according to reports in the Soviet press, was the oral criticism at the conferences of writers, students and Komsomol organizations. The people themselves, as a measure of protest and without the agreement of the Party apparatus, began for the first time in from 30 to 35 years to tell each other the truth and to call a spade a spade.

The first ferment among writers after Stalin's death was wiped out by the liquidation of the editorial staff of *Novy mir* and the public censuring of many writers. However, it was intensified again after the Twentieth Congress. In many printed organs, Communist writers directed sometimes hidden, sometimes open, criticism, not so much against Stalin himself as against his regime. In the main philosophical journal of the USSR, *Voprosy filosofii*, the critics B. Nazarov and O. Gridneva proclaimed the slogan: "Less administration, more practical work." The main point made by the authors was that artistic work cannot exist without creative freedom. They based their ideas on the following statement: "The higher the cultural level of a person, the greater will be his striving to decide all things independently, and the more he will defend the right to judge things for himself."

However, in connection with the events in Hungary, in which the writers played such a prominent role, the Party press embarked on a new campaign against possible "heretics" among Soviet writers. *Pravda* even devoted a special article to criticizing Nazarov and Gridneva, and stated "we refute that part of the article which is in effect directed against the leadership of the Party and the state." Soon *Pravda* returned to the same question, but this time it was against the Ukrainian writers. The article stated that there were people who, "taking shelter behind the slogan of struggle against the personality cult, try to spread ideas which are alien to the policy of the Party and the state. Various harmful anti-Party statements have been made by certain Ukrainian writers."

The writers in Moscow were given a similar "going-over," and were all put on their guard, as if Stalin and Zhdanov had come to life again. A fairly typical idea of their general attitude was given by People's Artist of the USSR, the director N. Okhlopkov, in *Pravda*:

We should now remember, we must remember, that we should not dull the genuine, creative ability of artistic people by any gauche bureaucratic methods or clumsy repetitions of the means of this "education" of artists, after which they no longer have any desire to produce creative work. There is a fresh, free air in our country. In creative work everything should be subordinated to tireless searching, discovery and research.<sup>24</sup>

However, Okhlopkov, nevertheless, remains a pessimist:

Alas, the new tasks have taken some people unawares. Others, it is true, have become very lively, excited, quarrelsome, and have begun to dream about the unusual artistic perspectives which are opening up. However, in fact, as very "experienced" people, they are patiently waiting for the moment when they will be able to hide again behind some well-worn phrase of socialist realism. Others are waiting, thinking: Well, who will be the first—better let somebody try it out.

The same may be said about the students. For the first time in the history of the Stalinist regime, there was an active anti-Communist student movement. This growth of political activity was expressed in such ways and to such a degree that it could clearly not be given the usual, official Soviet name of "criticism and

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<sup>24</sup> *Pravda*, December 5, 1956.

self-criticism," and touched the Stalinist regime itself. This was in principle a new phenomenon, completely unknown to the Soviet regime, but common in pre-revolutionary Russia, when the words "student" and "revolutionary" were almost synonymous.

Has this information been reflected or confirmed in the Soviet press? Yes, it has. It is impossible to analyze all the relevant information; we quote a few examples:

For example, the newspaper *Komsomolskaya pravda* writes:

There is no need to grieve now over the absence of discussions among the young people, particularly the students—there are plenty of them, covering the most diverse questions . . . . However, some of the discussions which have taken place recently in a number of institutions of higher education are bound to arouse objections. Not, of course, because other statements are biting and harsh. At these discussions it was possible to hear demagogic statements, by which an attempt was being made completely to pass over the irrefutable conquests of our socialist culture. Frequently, and in our opinion this is the main evil, such statements are concealed in the form of a crackling ultra-revolutionary slogan, designed by its "boldness" to remove the listeners' objections and to call forth applause.<sup>25</sup>

Similar, and sometimes even harsher, articles appeared in a number of newspapers in the Baltic States, Leningrad, and in the Ukraine.

Finally, *Kommunist* devoted a special editorial to Soviet students, containing such statements as the following:

1. The struggle must be intensified against bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology, "infiltrating our country by means of the radio, the press, etc."
2. Discussions should definitely be held in every student collective and the inner lack of foundation of incorrect statements should be exposed.
3. There should be no liberalism toward those who do not try to understand unclear questions and deliberately create confusion and disorganization.
4. A great deal of liberalism is being manifested in higher educational establishments toward those "who forget that their education is being paid for by the kolkhozniks and workers. Party organizations must see to it that a firm hand is felt in every educational establishment."<sup>26</sup>

With what are the students dissatisfied and what are their demands? The Soviet press only uses generalizations: "demagogy," "nihilism," and "ultra-revolution." That this ultra-revolution makes far-reaching demands is borne out by the fact that Khrushchev himself resolved to threaten the students with radical repressive measures. He repeated the answer given by the leaders of the Rumanian Communist Party to their own dissatisfied students: "If you don't like our methods, then go and work—others will come and study in your place."

The October events in Poland, the heroic revolution of the Hungarian people and the subsequent cruel suppression by the Soviet Army, even further intensified

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<sup>25</sup> *Komsomolskaya pravda*, December 4, 1956.

<sup>26</sup> *Kommunist*, December 1956.



the psychological crisis which had been brought about in the USSR by the revelation of Stalin's crimes. All this was most sensitively reflected in the Komsomol. It is completely valid to speak of a serious political and psychological crisis in the Komsomol. The exterior manifestation is the catastrophic drop in Komsomol membership. In 1954, at the Twelfth Komsomol Congress, Central Committee chairman Shelepin reported that Komsomol membership was 18,825,000.<sup>27</sup> Four years later in 1958 Shelepin stated in a lengthy report at the Thirteenth Komsomol Congress that "in the period under review more than 10 million young people have entered the ranks of the Komsomol," and that "the Komsomol has become a massive organization, 18 million strong."<sup>28</sup> Thus, since the total membership of the Komsomol amounted to 800,000 less than in 1954, it is quite obvious that 10.8 million members had left the Komsomol. Where had they gone? Into the Party, perhaps? No, according to Shelepin, only 735,000 Komsomol members joined the Party. If these 735,000 are taken away from the 10.8 million members, 10 million members (in round figures) left the Komsomol in four years, or, 250,000 members each year. Shelepin did not merely give no explanation of that fact; he did not even mention it. Had this been the normal withdrawal figure for Komsomol members past the age of 26 (now 27) who are automatically taken off the books, an explanation would probably have been given. This was the fourth stage in the history of the Komsomol. Khrushchev's government, in Shelepin's opinion, considers its basic task "to cultivate in the younger generation an aspiration to revolutionary romance and heroic deeds." This means that the young people must be brought back to faith in the cause of Communism and at the same time be inspired to new efforts and sacrifices in labor. For this purpose, the Party apparatus is mobilizing all its means of organization and propaganda. For example, Shelepin says: "All the various means of ideological influence must be directed to the education of active young builders of a Communist society." These means, it should be pointed out, are truly ample.

In the USSR 133 Komsomol newspapers, 20 Pioneer newspapers and 44 youth magazines are published. In 1958 the total circulation of these publications amounted to 14 million copies. Magazines and newspapers for young people are published in 26 national languages of the USSR. The Komsomol publishing house, *Molodaya Gvardiya*, publishes hundreds of books containing propaganda, political and artistic literature, with a total circulation of more than 20 million copies.<sup>29</sup> The central Komsomol newspaper, *Komsomolskaya pravda*, has a circulation of 5 million (prior to the Revolution all the newspapers in Russia had a circulation of 5.5 million). In addition, widespread propaganda is conducted among the young people by means of cinemas (68,000), radio broadcasting and rebroadcasting stations (31 million), libraries (400,000), and the constantly expanding television network.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *Pravda*, March 20, 1954.

<sup>28</sup> *Komsomolskaya pravda*, April 16, 1958.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*; "Komsomol Propagandist's Handbook," p. 88.

<sup>30</sup> *Komsomolskaya pravda*, April 16, 1958.

This vast, complex propaganda machine is constantly, by the day, the month, the year, the decade, drumming one and the same idea into the young people. In the name of present-day socialism in the USSR, and in the name of tomorrow's Communism throughout the world, sacrifices must be made. Sacrifice, obedience, and industriousness are the three qualities which the Party apparatus is cultivating in Soviet young people. In order to succeed in this, the Party has worked out in the most intricate detail a special branch of learning, known as "Communist education." Naturally, this branch of learning makes wide use of everything which interests all young people in every country; sport, travel, games, music, painting, dancing, and even love. In addition, the Party bureaucracy, as the ruling class, teaches its replacement and its children what have until now been declared to be the prejudices of "bourgeois-aristocratic culture." Shelepin says that the Komsomol and the local committees must "more actively inculcate good taste in the younger generation, teach young people correctly to appreciate what is beautiful and what not, to pay attention to appearance, deportment and manners. . . . We must cultivate our fine marriage ceremony. . . . Maybe it would be a good idea to wear wedding rings. . . ."<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, young people in the USSR have always lived and are still living two lives; one in the Komsomol, where they are obedient, industrious, vigilant and Communist, and the other at home, where they behave like normal human beings, even indulging in rock-'n-roll.

Shelepin, the former secretary of the Komsomol who was recently appointed Chairman of the Committee of State Security of the USSR, admitted this duplicity in the life of the Soviet younger generation, but ascribed its origin and appearance to the evil propagandists of the West. He said:

Moreover, the propagandists of Western culture are trying to inculcate in Soviet young people views and tastes which are alien to them. Take, for example, American rock-'n-roll. It cultivates looseness and arouses evil feelings which are unworthy of man. Our youth must cultivate in itself precisely the opposite qualities—resolution, stoicism . . . . We have attacked and will continue to attack this dance of neurotics.<sup>32</sup>

The most characteristic and most tragic feature of the so-called "Communist education" of youth is the methodical and systematic mutilation of the mind of the young person. Communism does not recognize those generally accepted moral and ethical precepts on which human life has been based for centuries. "Everything is moral which helps the Communist rule," is the Communist doctrine. Basically, the moral philosophy of the Communists approaches Machiavellism, "the end justifies the means." The conduct of a person not only in society but also in his private life is thus controlled from the point of view of the interests of the political regime, as we saw above from Shelepin's speech. But this runs counter to the conservative sense of duty, and here the famous "capitalist relics in the consciousness of the people" become telling. Here human nature itself protests

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

with all its force against the "utilization" of its higher spiritual qualities for the coarse, material, egoistic interests of the regime. In the struggle between these two principles, between the eternally human and the temporary, the egoistic, between the exalted, the ideal and the coarse, the materialistic, in short, the struggle of power against man and humanity, a new type of human monster of the Stalinist school has been born—the political double-dealer. His philosophy is simple: do not say what you think, and do not think what you say. Political double-dealing under a Communist regime is not only moral deformity; it is also one of the most important methods of self-preservation. It is even more than this. It is one of the ways of achieving a Party and state career. However, the Stalinist regime not only begat the double-dealer as the typical representative of the new system, but also begat a whole army of liars and political informers. Deliberate lying and political denunciation are the methods of reprisal used by the government against *personae non gratae*. The government has cultivated these attributes with equal diligence among the Komsomol and among children. Remember the story of Pavlik Morozov. A similar "methodological" weapon in the hands of the government was the cultivation of the feeling of fear, that is political fear of the NKVD, which is believed to have supernatural powers by which it sees everything, knows everything, can do everything, and never makes a mistake. Thus, the army of informers not only consists of informers by conviction or training, but also of those who are informers out of fear of the completely "omnipotent" NKVD. Unfortunately, these histories of former Komsomol members pay little attention to this "moral and ethical" side of the Komsomol school, but there are, of course, some excellent exceptions among them. The works in this collection are memoirs of former Komsomol members from various periods—during the Civil War, the period of industrialization and collectivization and just before the Second World War. The reader will immediately appreciate the basic and characteristic value of the various histories and the exceptional objectivity and disarming sincerity of the authors. On the other hand, such objectivity and sincerity, regardless of the present attitude of the authors, even borders to a certain extent on an apology for the Komsomol.

A rose-colored youth has also been reflected in the "rose-colored relics" of these memoirs. These sincere narrations are, thus, all the more valuable for research on the history of the Soviet younger generation.

Better than academic monographs, these memoirs of former Komsomol members reveal to the outside world the monstrous truth of how well the Bolsheviks have managed to organize politically, to enslave ideologically and to deform morally the youth of the country. They indicate that the art of Bolshevism will, nevertheless, not reach its final goal—the eternally human, the exalted and the living will raise themselves above it, fighting a way for themselves through the murky darkness of Communist obscurantism, as in Tolstoy's *Resurrection* the symbolic blade of grass rose up and fought its way out from under the hard asphalt of the prison yard.

## Blind Faith in a Bright Future

Born in 1904, I belong to a generation a considerable part of which, carried away by the storm of the Revolution and infected by the emotion of the struggle for a bright future, during the years of the Civil War defended the Soviet regime without any regard for its own life. Many trials and tribulations fell to the lot of my generation. Many of my comrades who could not withstand the cruel intensity of the era fell by the wayside. Many died the death of the brave, to be replaced by tens of thousands of new and equally blind enthusiasts; and the revolutionary stream of youth, trying to find a place in the stormy events of those years and believing in the possibility of realizing the people's eternal dream of a free and prosperous life, did not cease to drive onward. We were led by leaders who had advanced from within our own circle and in battle knew neither fatigue, fear nor hesitation. They died, uttering in their last living moments slogans full of faith in Communism. And we became infected with this spirit.

I would like to talk about my generation. It deserves it. However, to talk about it would mean writing a story extending to many volumes. I shall therefore limit myself to an account of my own life, which is, of course, not the same thing. But I am a part of my generation and in my fate, as in a drop of water, are reflected the aspirations and views of the entire youth of the era of the Civil War and the first few years of the consolidation of the Soviet regime.

In my description of isolated facts I want to avoid the well-worn phrases and terms of which we had our fill in our Komsomol days. I shall talk simply and frankly, as I would have talked about myself in a Komsomol committee to my former friends and leaders who enjoyed our unlimited trust. And so, here is the biography of an ordinary Komsomol member.

The gray outskirts of a large city. A dim-lit room. Two beds. A small stove. Mother used to come back from work late. She worked in a mill, earning 40 kopeks a day. My elder sister sat at her sewing machine day and night, working on orders received from the local poor peasants. From hand-me-downs and left-over pieces of cloth she tried to make clothing for the family, which consisted of my mother, myself and my younger sisters. We frequently lived on the brink of starvation. Such are my recollections of my early childhood in the years 1909-1911.

My father was rarely mentioned in the family. I merely knew that he had been a master lathe operator in the Kiev Arsenal Works and had died in a railway accident. Our moving to Kharkov in 1908 was somehow connected with the death of my father. When I began to grow a little older, I had to perform such household tasks as normally fall to grown men: chopping wood, fetching water, lighting

the stove and putting the household articles in order. My elder sister, who cherished a great love for me as her only brother and the "little master of the house," devoted time in the evenings to teaching me to read, write and figure. She sometimes bought children's books with her savings, which was a great pleasure for me. The books mainly contained stories about animal life. I read them aloud, and my mother, hearing me, added her own stories to those in the books. She happened to come from the country and loved nature, considering that all living things were intelligent and that "everything comes from God," and she inspired me with faith in good and truth. Thus from early days I reacted sharply to all injustice.

In the autumn of 1912, when I reached the age of eight, I was sent to school for the first time. I passed the admission test with a five-plus, which greatly surprised the teacher, who knew that I was the son of a widow. At school I sensed self-contradictions for the first time. What my mother had instilled in me about the solemnity of justice had no relation to what I saw. Some of my classmates had good clothes and footwear and brought to school titbits of which I had previously no idea. Others, like myself, went around in rags and shoes which had been handed down from older brothers and sisters, and lacked the three kopeks to buy themselves a bun during recess. I tried to talk about this to my mother, but she could not give me a satisfactory answer, repeating over and over again the same sentence: "My son, God has ordained that not everyone on earth can be equally happy." In order not to offend her, I pretended to agree with her, but a feeling of illwill toward the rich began to take root in my mind. It gathered particular strength because the sons of the rich were frequently great idlers, who did not do their school work properly and copied the answers from more gifted pupils, to whom they gave part of their titbits for their services.

In 1914 the war broke out. Neighboring soldiers' wives began to turn to us frequently, and I had to read letters from husbands at the front and reply to them. From these letters I learned much of the sorrows of others, and this increased even more my doubts of the justice of the world which had been created by God.

Living conditions became more difficult. My mother did not know how to make ends meet, and several times prepared to bind me over to a shoemaker as an apprentice. However, my older sister was decidedly against this. "I will sew day and night," she said, "and Nikolai will finish school." I worked hard and got the best marks in every subject. On Sundays and holidays I went to my teacher's house, cleaned her yard for her, chopped wood and fetched water. For this I received from her some of her old clothing or shoes and—most important of all—books.

In 1916 I finished school and my mother took me to a factory. The foreman did not want to take me on, saying that I was too small, but I showed him my strength by picking up a 100-pound box of nails, which almost ruptured me. And so I was taken on, and became a "worker." My mother and even more my older sister tried to please me in every way possible. They lovingly called me the "master of the house" and the "breadwinner." When I came home from work I was always

placed at the head of the table. The thought that I was really helping the family even caused me to refuse to play games with my friends. After work I stayed at home and tried to make or repair something for the home.

One of the rich men who had no children of his own, seeing that I was industrious, suggested to my mother that she let him adopt me. With good intentions—to give me the opportunity of “getting on in the world,” i.e., of receiving a good education and learning a profession that would bring me a good income—my mother almost agreed. She told us about it at supper, at which my sisters ran from the table and began to cry and to reproach my mother for her cruelty and heartlessness.

After about two days the rich man came for the final answer. My sisters silently directed their gaze at my mother. Mother also remained silent. The childless rich man then tried to get his way by another means. “Well,” he said, smiling, “let’s ask the little chap himself if he wants to come to me.” “Ask him,” said mother barely audibly, with tears streaming down her face. “Well then, how about it?” the rich man asked me, “are you coming to me, little one? You will be a man. . .” I looked at my sisters. Their wide eyes were saying a prayer. I understood and said brusquely, “No!” The same evening my older sister read aloud deliberately from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, which she had obtained for the occasion. Mother sighed. After this none of us ever reminded mother that she had wanted to give me away to strangers. Only she herself, feeling the pangs of conscience, occasionally said to me: “Look, my son, I only wanted to do the best for you.”

Late autumn in 1917. The streets of Kharkov were crowded with demonstrators, each with a red band across his breast on which were written violent slogans, such as “Peace to the hovels, war to the palaces!,” “All power to the Soviets!,” “The factories to the workers and the land to the peasants!” and “Peace without annexations and indemnities!” In various parts of the town clothing and footwear confiscated from the wealthy were being distributed. There were meetings everywhere. Orators took turns speaking. “From now on there are no masters!” thundered from the platform, “There are no poor and no rich! All are equal!”

At work the foreman supported what the orators had said and declared that all should now call each other “comrades.”

Then the Civil War began. Ragged White Guard detachments passed through Kharkov, among them Germans and Skoropadsky’s troops. The tricolor flag of Denikin’s volunteers was hoisted in Kharkov. It was not until the beginning of 1919 when the Soviet regime was once again consolidated in the city, that the position became somewhat more stable.

I had long since ceased to work at the factory, for there was no sense in it—no one paid any wages. When Soviet institutions were set up in Kharkov, I entered the Provincial Military Supply Service as a messenger boy. The commissar in charge at the time was a certain Samarsky and the manager Vasily Vasilievich Polyakov, who later followed Rakovsky as Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars of the Ukraine.

Like everyone else, I did not receive any money for my work. Instead of wages we received once a month several pounds of millet, two or three meters of cloth, a few bottles of beer and also some household articles, such as pots and pans. The workers were issued 200 grams of bread a day. Since neither my mother nor my sister could get work, I became the only breadwinner in the family.

At that time, wounded and injured Red Army commanders began to arrive in the city and were given positions in our establishments. One was taken on in the Provincial Military Supply Service. He was a young man in a long artillery great-coat with a row of red buttons on his breast, the uniform worn by those who served under Marshal Budenny. His name was Morozov.

Morozov did not do anything in particular, but walked around the rooms getting to know the clerks and carrying on conversations with them on all sorts of topics. As I later found out, he had served as a political worker in Budenny's First Cavalry and after receiving a head wound had been sent to us as a Komsomol organizer. A precise, sociable and intelligent man of military bearing, Morozov soon won the friendship of the clerks and workers in the stores of the Provincial Military Supply Service. However, he was, of course, primarily interested in the young people. He often talked to us about what the Revolution was giving the people and what tasks the Soviet government was faced with; he also spoke about the duty of every young person to defend and put into effect the conquests of the Revolution. Morozov could get on with everyone, quickly found the most sensitive spots in the thought of the person he was talking to, and even forced those who did not belong to the category of worker to agree with him.

Once, in the summer of 1919, we both drew our rations together. Morozov asked me: "Well, how are things?" "All right, thank you," I replied carefully. "How do you mean, all right?" he asked with a smile. "There's not much to eat and you have a large family . . ." "But how do you know?" I asked in surprise. "I know. It's my job to know," he said, and, giving me his ration of bread, added, "come and see me tomorrow. We can have a little talk."

The next day I went to see him. Morozov lived in a little room in the Provincial Military Supply Service building. The entire furniture consisted of a bunk with a government-issue blanket, a chair and a row of books on the window-sill. "Sit down," he said to me, pointing to the bunk.

"Well then," he began, "let's talk about your father." "I have no father—he was killed in a railway accident," I answered. "That's wrong," interrupted Morozov, "he was not killed in a railway accident; he was killed by the gendarmes." This news stunned me, but Morozov, pausing a little, began to tell me that my father had been an underground revolutionist and had been accused of heading a Social-Democratic group of workers. Morozov spoke, and in front of me, as in a mist, I saw pictures of the revolt of the Arsenal workers in Kiev, barricade battles, the death of my father, and then the deportation of my family to Khar'kov. "You see," continued Morozov, "your father died for his country and for his freedom. He fought so that you and others like you could live like human beings. Do you understand?" I nodded. "And now you must realize that your place is in the Komsomol," he concluded.

It was the first time that I had heard the word "Komsomol," and I asked what it meant. He explained that it meant the Communist Youth League. In conclusion, Morozov showed me his own Komsomol card. Not understanding very much of what he was telling me, I agreed to join the Komsomol.

Within a few days, the Komsomol organization of our establishment, the membership of which at that time amounted to 17, unanimously accepted me as a member. The meeting was attended by Samarsky and Polyakov. Morozov had painted such a flattering picture of me that it seemed as if I, and not my father, had been the hero in 1905. After the meeting everyone began to regard me differently. They began to call the previously unnoticed sixteen-year old messenger boy by name, adding the word "comrade." Samarsky and Polyakov often took me home for supper and sometimes I stayed over night with them. Later, thanks to them, we obtained a requisitioned two-room flat. In addition, my mother began to receive help from the People's Commissariat for Social Security. This support was regarded by the family as being an achievement of the Revolution.

I, a lad of sixteen, began to be very proud of my Komsomol card, on which were written my Komsomol duties, or rather the Komsomol oath. I became even more convinced of the truth of what Morozov had said. I became accustomed to the thought and even the necessity of following in my father's footsteps and continuing his struggle for the welfare of the people. My pride in my underground father made me more daring. Sometimes I tried to say something at a general Komsomol meeting, but, not yet being used to a large audience, with dozens of pairs of eyes trained on me, I lost my nerve and sat down again, blushing deeply. However, Morozov rewarded me each time with his applause. This made me furious, and after several attempts to prove that I could speak, I did in fact finally learn to hold my own freely at meetings.

My recollections of Morozov are of a sincere and dedicated revolutionist devoting his strength and knowledge to the cause of the working people. As I later found out from him—he frequently came to us for assistance—the Revolution had torn him away forever from his home and from his parents, who had remained in a camp for enemies of the Soviets.

I once attracted the attention of the secretary of the raion committee of the Komsomol, a young girl in a leather jacket and a red kerchief. She showered me with reproaches: "What sort of Komsomol member are you, if ikons and a portrait of Nicholas I are hanging in your home?" "Well, you see, my mother. . .," I tried to explain. "Your mother!" she teased me. "You ought to convert her!" After this I tried to persuade my mother to take down the picture of the Tsar and at least some of the icons, to which the entire entrance hall of the house was given up. However, nothing came of this. My mother not only flatly refused, but even complained about me to Morozov. I do not know what Morozov said to her, but she only took down the portrait of the Tsar. Morozov chided me, and told me not to bring up the subject of the icons again. "It's not yet time. The people can't achieve everything at once," he concluded.



The city was threatened with danger, and the Soviet establishments were hurriedly evacuated. I was once again without work, and had to sell flowers in the street. Once I turned into the North Donetsk Station, where the First Ukrainian Light Brigade was entraining prior to being sent to the northern front against General Yudenich. The Red soldiers surrounded me and took all my flowers, paying me in the counterfeit money in circulation in large quantities at the time. I raised an alarm. The brigade commissar, a young ex-student revolutionist, asked what was the matter. He took me to the commander's car and began to ask what the Red soldiers who had tricked me looked like. Learning that I had worked in the Provincial Military Supply Service, he and the brigade commander, Zharikov, a former officer in the Tsarist army, suggested that I join the brigade. It was a tempting suggestion, for military service always turns young heads. The commissar, whose name was Sinyavsky, promised to inform my parents where I was at the first opportunity, and this decided my fate.

In many respects Sinyavsky reminded me of Morozov. Incidentally, he also came from a well-to-do family and, breaking with it, had "joined the Revolution." He treated me with great kindness, trying to make of me a model soldier, always self-controlled.

There were nearly seventy Komsomol members in the brigade. The leader of the organization was a young sailor called Solovei. He demanded that we Komsomol members be an example of restraint and discipline to the other Red Army men. This is not easy when you are not yet seventeen and have a Budenny helmet on your head with a red star. One tried to show off in his quarters and frighten the residents, but Solovei was strict and the Komsomol card reminded one of his duty.

After a month and a half the brigade finally arrived near Petrograd, and here, in one of the first battles, at the village of Krasny, the commissar Sinyavsky and the sailor Solovei were killed, among many others. We stood in closed ranks, freezing. The coffins lay near the freshly dug grave. The brigade commander uttered the final words of farewell: "Our best soldiers and comrades have brought nearer the day of victory by their blood. There must be more efforts! The day of peaceful labor is at hand." After this he called me from the ranks and, giving me the commander's revolver, added: "Be like your teacher, Commissar Sinyavsky. He acted as well as spoke." All this had a great effect on me. I had a lump in my throat and I could feel tears welling up in my eyes. When the final salute of farewell rang out, I fired in the air several times with the revolver which I had just received, and in the evening, at the Komsomol meeting, I swore an oath of vengeance for the comrades who had died before our very eyes, merciless vengeance, until not a single enemy of the workers' and peasants' regime existed on earth.

After the northern front had been wiped out, I was made a ward of the First Ukrainian Light Brigade and was sent to stay with a childless peasant family. It was not a bad life, but my mother and sisters were calling me to come back home, and in 1922 I returned to Kharkov.

At home there was great rejoicing when I returned home. No one reproached me for my self-willed departure for the front. I registered in the Military Committee and was put on the list of the City Committee of the Komsomol. Thinking

about the future, I decided to go to work again in a factory in order to become qualified as a lathe operator. However, my plans were disrupted, for within a few months I was called to the Political Section of the local Cheka Special Unit. I turned up there in my old Red Army uniform, but without the red star on the helmet. I announced myself as "Ward of the First Ukrainian Light Brigade reporting."

"So you are a ward of the First Ukrainian Light Brigade," said the head of the Political Section, looking at me ironically. "And where's your Red Army insignia? Have you forgotten about your Komsomol conscience?"

I wanted to say that war was over, that I was not a conscript, but a former volunteer and that the Komsomol conscience was not in place here, but the head of the Political Section ordered me: "About face! Adjust your dress and report properly!"

Reluctantly I turned about and left. At home I cleaned my uniform, fixed the star on my helmet and once more reported to the head of the Political Section. He was more friendly to me this time. He asked me to show him my Komsomol card, and reading aloud the Komsomol oath written on the cover of the card, he said: "You have no right to leave the army. If you leave, why shouldn't I, and then who would be left to defend the country? Where would we get our commanders from for future battles? Stay with us. Join the general staff and get properly trained."

I was given a post as guard at the adjoining doors of the People's Commissar for Justice of the Ukraine, N. Skrypnyk, and the president of the Ukrainian All-Union Executive Committee, G. I. Petrovsky. Their offices were situated in a former bank building on Nikolai Square. Here lived also the Magistrate for Affairs of High Importance, the former president of the Cheka of the Ukraine, Stepan Sayenko, whose very name used to make the inhabitants of Kharkov shudder.

To be quite honest, the trust which was placed in me by my assignment to protect such important statesmen filled me with a feeling of great pride. I examined everyone who went in to see Skrypkin or Petrovsky, although I knew that people had already been searched by the appropriate OGPU officials. I would have probably unthinkingly shot at anyone who looked suspicious to me, for I believed that the people whom I was protecting had brought about the Revolution which had given a bearable life to my family and millions of others previously poverty-stricken.

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At that time the city organization of the Komsomol was headed by Alexander Serov, the son of Stepan Sayenko. He had deliberately changed his name so that his father's reputation would not hamper him in his work with young people. He often appeared in the streets of Kharkov among a crowd of young boys and girls. He could almost always be seen with a spade or shovel in the ranks of the Komsomol youth putting in their voluntary free days of service. He knew practically every Komsomol member in the city personally and had been invited to the home of nearly every one.

The spirit of the Komsomol youth of that time must be mentioned. In public life and in their way of living the Komsomol members tried to realize the principles of Communism even then. If anyone had two suits or two pairs of shoes, he kept only what was most essential and gave the rest to his comrades. Not to share an extra smoked fish which had been gotten hold of somewhere or cigarettes taken in exchange for a lighter, not to help a comrade in need, was looked upon as a disgrace, as behavior unworthy of a Komsomol member. Each of us therefore broke his neck trying to prove his faithfulness to the collective and to be one of the foremost in the Komsomol mutual aid system. We sincerely believed that we had nothing to lose, apart from the freedom which we had won, and that there was nothing but a fine future ahead of us. We were ready to cut the throat of anyone who raised a hand against the Soviet regime and paid no attention to the difficulties of the time, and we devoted all our efforts to restoring the shattered economy of the country which had been bequeathed to us as our heritage from the Revolution itself.

I remember an occasion when Alexander Serov, surrounded by a crowd of girls in red kerchiefs and boys in multicolored clothing, was talking with a group of old Communists—Petrovsky, Skrypnik, Zatonsky, Buzdalin, Rogovsky and others. They were discussing the future. Infected with our Komsomol optimism and the humor with which we were complaining about the shortage of food and clothing, Petrovsky even got excited. "You are certainly all right!" These Old Communists supported us in our belief that the future belonged to us alone. They encouraged our initiative and corrected the failures and mistakes which in the fire of our enthusiasm we often allowed to creep into our work.

In the same year, 1922, I had to take part in a great campaign of agitation connected with the trial of some saboteurs in the timber industry. More than forty persons were on trial at the time and were threatened with execution. The relatives of the accused besieged our building every day, trying to obtain permission to speak to Skrypnik or Petrovsky in order to beg for mercy. Noticeable unrest in favor of the accused spread through the city, and the Komsomol members of the Cheka Special Unit were given the task of analyzing public opinion on the harsh verdict. I, together with other Komsomol members, had to speak at factories and even at street meetings, shouting out the phrases which we had learned during our instruction in the Political Section.

I stayed in the Cheka Special Unit until 1923, when I was sent by the Komsomol to the Leningrad Military Academy.

I stayed in the military academy until 1927. There, in addition to purely military training, I studied by myself in order to enrich my mind politically and ideologically. During this time I did hardly any Komsomol work apart from carrying out minor individual tasks such as visiting subordinate enterprises and speaking at meetings. The most significant event in my life at this time was the fact that, in January 1924, at a meeting dedicated to the death of Lenin, I was promoted to become a member of the Russian Communist Party of Bolsheviks. In point of fact I still remained in the Komsomol.

When I finished the Academy I was sent back to Kharkov, where I was appointed to the 23rd Light Division as deputy head of the school for younger Komsomol members in one of the regiments.

Soon the country began to make preparations to solve the peasant problem by complete collectivization. Party work in the country areas began to become militarized and the most reliable and dedicated Communists were sent to these places.

I was once sent for by Fishman, the unit commissar, who had at one time been political officer in the famous Chapayev Division. "There is a responsible Komsomol task facing you," he said. "Report to the division Political Section at 1800 hours for instructions." At the Political Section office I saw a group of young people in semi-military uniforms, who turned out to be Komsomol employees of the Komsomol oblast committee. We were given our assignment by the head of the section. He said: "We are changing over from a policy of limiting the kulak class to completely liquidating them as a class. The kulaks are undermining the Soviet regime's measures for grain delivery. They want to starve the Soviet regime to death. They are killing our activists. We have the power and authority of our Army. In each Komsomol brigade which is sent to a village, we are appointing a Komsomol soldier as the senior member. And just let them try and kill even a single soldier. They will be shot by the thousands." Turning directly to me, he concluded: "Tomorrow you will go to a village as head of a brigade and will force the peasants to sow crops. Our enemies want to use the coming of Easter as an excuse for disrupting the planting program. You know what it means to delay sowing."

The logic of the chief of the division political section struck me as convincing. His words were filled with hatred of the kulaks and his faith in the correctness of the policy which the Party was carrying out. And I, not knowing the countryside, not knowing the kulaks and their hopes, set to work on my new job, determined to fulfill my task whatever happened.

On the following day, much to the dismay of my mother, who was accustomed to celebrating Easter with me, I went into the country. I remember my mother saying as I left: "My son, make sure that you don't hurt anyone, and bring no sin upon yourself."

My assignment was to make a speech in the church during the Easter service and tell the peasants to go out and start their sowing. I thought out beforehand what I was going to say, and as I approached the portal of the church I had it formulated in a coherent speech. But the peasants who were standing at the entrance looked at me in such an unfriendly and frightened manner that I was suddenly overcome with a feeling of disgust. I remembered the words of the chief of the division Political Section and thought of my dead father and Sinyavsky and Solovei, and it was only then that I became filled with fury against the unseen enemies of the Soviet regime and ran into the church. Nonetheless, the words which usually came so easily somehow stuck in my throat.

In front of me could be heard the penetrating, quiet voice of the priest, the incantations of the deacon and the singing of the choir. Round about stood women, making the sign of the cross, many of them with tears in their eyes. In the presence of the humbling power of the devout solemnity I felt like a small man indeed. My determination abandoned me, and, after staying for a while, I left the church in embarrassment.

At the church fence there stood a group of peasants, and one of them said something, nodding his head in my direction. This once more brought my mind back to my Party and my Komsomol assignment, and I went up to them and asked with some trepidation in my voice: "And when shall we get busy with sowing?" "Sowing," asked one of the peasants, "after Easter of course." "And how long does your Easter last?" I asked again sarcastically. "Some take a week, some two," was the reply. "But the crops will all be lost. The soil won't yield anything!" I shouted. "There'll be enough for us. We don't need much . . ."

I then got lost in long-winded explanations about how one should not live thinking only of oneself, and how one should also think of the interests of the state. Then by arrangement beforehand, some local Komsomol members came up and began to support me, timidly but enough to encourage me. I began to talk about myself and about my comrades who had died at the front in order that the peasants might have their own land. The peasants began to yield a little, but bluntly refused to go and sow their crops on Monday. "You young people do what you like, and we'll celebrate. That's what our fathers and grandfathers did, and that's what we'll do," replied the most well-spoken and unruffled peasant, speaking for all of them.

On Monday I called together the village Komsomol members and we went out into the fields with linden-bark baskets and grain. Due to their inexperience the work was naturally not very easy, and in addition, the peasants gathered and watched us malevolently. Suddenly, to my surprise, from the crowd there appeared the same well-spoken and unruffled peasant who replied to my propaganda the day before. He took a basket from one of the Komsomol boys and, crossing himself, began to scatter the seed with the extraordinary ease which comes only from long years of experience. Someone brought an accordion and began to play a waltz. A few more peasants took hold of baskets, and people began to tell jokes. The tense atmosphere began gradually to disperse. Plucking up my courage, I went up to an old man who was particularly diligent in the use of malicious phrases directed at us, calling us atheists and loafers, and asked him: "Tell me, Grandpa, what gospel says that working on holidays is a sin? After all, today isn't the seventh day of the week." The old man was at a loss for an answer and in surprise cried out to the crowd: "There's a real atheist for you—he knows the gospels." Everyone laughed and that was the end of our cold war.

The following day the sowing was finished, and so I had fulfilled my first task in the country, for which I was given a certificate of thanks.

In 1930 work was begun on construction of the Kharkov Tractor Plant. The Komsomol organizations, including the military ones, were called upon to

take an active part in the work. The entire Komsomol membership of the 23rd Division was assigned to this work. Under the leadership of the divisional commander, Lukin, we carried out the initial excavations and also some of the concrete pouring. We worked alongside Komsomol members who had come from various factories, institutions or villages.

This was a new generation of young people, driven not by hatred of the enemies of the Soviet regime, but by a desire to see their country become mechanized and a wish to master technical matters themselves. In the eyes of these boys and girls one could catch the same blind stare as in the eyes of the people of my age during the Civil War. They froze their fingers, worked up to their knees in mud and got soaked by rain, but they did not walk off the job. At difficult times we set up "shock brigades" and "crash brigades," which worked from 16 to 18 hours a day.

The division was awarded the Order of Lenin, and I, in company with the best shock construction workers of the Komsomol military organization, was called to Moscow where Voroshilov presented me with my own personal badge of honor.

It is true that it was not a desire for honors or rewards that caused me to do without sleep and to devote all my energy to the Party and the Komsomol. I carried out all kinds of small and large Party and Komsomol tasks in answer to some inner call. I believed that the construction of socialism in our country would radically change the future of the nation, and that by a high degree of mechanization of labor and scientific achievements the doors would be flung open to cultural growth and a life free of care. I saw that the older generation, worn out after the years of the war and the postwar chaos, were no longer in a position to withstand the difficulties involved in the construction of socialism. I thus came to the conclusion that success in transforming the country depended entirely on the physical exertions and the will of persons like myself. And I went among the young people to infect them with my faith and my belief in the approaching hour of the victory of socialism and to lead them to share in the most difficult parts of this construction program. The young people followed behind me, seeing in me "an old Komsomol member" and the son of an underground hero. This in turn caused me to make even greater demands on myself and to think carefully about every step I took, for the young Komsomol members tried to model themselves on my example.

On my return from Moscow I was confirmed in my post as executive secretary of my regimental Komsomol organization.

In 1932 I was transferred to the Far East, under an appointment as deputy commander of the Political Section of an engineer battalion. Here I continued to be a member of the Komsomol, although I was already too old for the organization. Why did I do this? Probably because I did not want to break with the Komsomol, which had led me on to the broad path of life, had aided me in becoming an officer in the Red Army and had helped me to become a man conscious

of the breadth of his rights as a citizen. In particular, I did not want to break with the organization with which all my faith and hopes were linked, and I now wanted to repay the Komsomol for what it had done for me by trying to convey my experience to the younger Komsomol organizers.

In the Far East, by dint of the fact that the military units were located so far from populated areas, the work of the military Komsomol did not extend beyond purely military activity. The mission of the Komsomol organization of each unit amounted to: (1) promoting the carrying out of the military and political training plan for the troops by organizing socialist competitions for the best students, and (2) indoctrinating non-Komsomol young people who joined the army with a spirit of devotion to the homeland and loyalty to their military duty. It is obvious that each Komsomol member was responsible for being a model, disciplined soldier. Accordingly, Komsomol work in the army was marked by a certain degree of narrowness and monotony. There was basically nothing exciting about it.

After a year I went to my native Kharkov on leave. There was a famine in the Ukraine, and I saw the dilapidated peasant huts and the bloated people in the streets. My mother, knowing what had happened in the country, cautiously tried to tell me how special brigades composed of Komsomol and Party members under the command of plenipotentiaries sent from the cities had taken away all the grain from the peasants, to the last kernel, and how those who resisted had been rounded up and taken off to the cities. . . . I believed my mother, but I could not imagine that the famine in the Ukraine had been deliberately caused by the Soviet regime. Believing the Party press, I linked it with sabotage by the kulaks and the "crooks" among the local Party functionaries. Stalin's phrase about "growing pains" was constantly in my mind and prevented me from appraising events in their true light.

My leave coincided with the campaign of denunciation of the so-called National Democrats—Skrypnyk and other prominent Ukrainian Communists—who were alleged to be plotting the secession of the Ukraine from the USSR and the restoration of capitalism there. All the young Party and Komsomol members were thrown into this campaign. They were sent to factories and offices to hold special meetings at which resolutions were passed censuring the "nationalist deviation" of former leaders of the Ukrainian Bolshevik Party. So-called "social prosecutors" were chosen from among them who demanded, at these meetings severe penalties for these traitors to the cause of the Revolution and socialism. Despite the fact that I was officially on leave, I was also dragged into this work.

I will be frank. I was not so much subordinated to Party and Komsomol discipline as inwardly prepared for the struggle against "nationalist deviation." At one of the meetings I said: "At one time I stood at Skrypnyk's door, ready to put a bullet into anyone who dared to raise a hand against him. Now I am prepared to shoot this same Skrypnyk who has betrayed the interests of the working people of the Ukraine."

Was I sincere in these few moments? Yes! After hearing information at a city meeting of the Party and Komsomol *aktiv* to the effect that over the course of many years Skrypnik had planted his supporters in all the Soviet organs and with their help had thus made preparations for a revolution in the Ukraine, I lost all respect and sympathy for him. I even cursed him inwardly and tried to drive out of my mind all the precepts which I had heard from him in my youth. It is true that I felt sorry for his wife, who was almost the same age as myself and despite her "non-proletarian" origin had been carried away by the Revolution together with us. She had not been a member of the Komsomol, but had often come to our Komsomol meetings.

I do not maintain that all Komsomol members had the same attitude as I. I well remember how some Komsomol girls, who had known Skrypnik previously as an ideal Communist to be looked up to, went to Petrovsky in tears and asked him to intercede in favor of the "erring People's Commissar" and to give him the chance of "correcting himself." These Komsomol girls were in turn censured at Komsomol meetings.

The military machine of the Red Army works non-stop 24 hours a day. It is difficult to say how many hours a commander of the Red Army works. At any event he has no time for a private life and has no time for meditation or doubts about questions not connected with military service. Months and years are spent in monotony—in the barracks, on field duty, in studying, on night-watch and again in the barracks.

There came the year 1937. A number of officers and political functionaries began to be arrested. The newspapers were increasingly filled with the fateful words "enemy of the people." "Enemies of the people" had penetrated to the Komsomol leadership, there were "enemies of the people" among writers, "enemies of the people" everywhere. I received news from home that my oldest sister's husband, a veterinary surgeon, had been arrested, and that the husband of my second sister, the manager of a stock-farm for horses, had been expelled from the Party and removed from his post.

I was accustomed to trusting the Party leaders and to believing every word which was printed in *Pravda*, and I did not doubt this time that my relatives and friends who had been arrested by the organs of the NKVD had really been secretly plotting against the Soviet regime. However, I could not understand one thing: why had they begun to plot against the regime? Who were they working for and what advantage did it bring them?

In the course of all these years this was the first question to which I could not find an answer, and like a worm it bored deeper and deeper into my mind.

July 1938. The limited conflict on Lake Khasan threatened to turn into a "small" siege. Stalin's special plenipotentiary, Mekhlis, arrived in the Far East, armed with unlimited powers. All officers and commissars who aroused his suspicions were removed from their units. Blücher, who was in charge of operations, was ousted and Stern was limited in his activities. On August 5 Mekhlis summoned to a secret conference a selected group of unit officers and commissars.



They were instructed to form special platoons and regiments of Komsomol members and during the night of August 6 to drive the Japanese back from the heights on Soviet territory which they had occupied by a heavy attack. "Stalin has ordered," concluded Mekhlis with a certain amount of solemnity in his voice, "that the invaders be given a lesson, without crossing our border."

"Without crossing our border" meant attacking the enemy from the front and advancing along narrow paths and through marshes, without hope of technical support. However, orders are orders. Things started in the units. Young Communists and the most active Komsomol members were assigned to small units for the purpose of kindling a martial spirit. The soldiers were hypnotized into submitting statements to the Komsomol worded, "I want to give up my life for my own Stalin!"

The attack began at 2 o'clock in the morning, and the battle was finished by noon. At the cost of thousands of Red Army privates and young officers the heights were cleared of Japanese. The majority of the Red Army men who had been admitted to the Komsomol before the battle never received their Komsomol membership cards.

After the operation was over and the battlefield had been cleared our division was transferred to the Lake Khanko area. The spirits of the soldiers and their officers were low. We rejoiced over neither our awards nor our promotions (I had become battalion commander) nor the presents sent to us in the name of the workers of our country. There were many comrades missing from our ranks, and the main thing was that we ourselves had picked up these comrades from the battlefield, disfigured and blackened with heat and suffering. Attempts to create a cheerful mood by singing military songs was of no avail. And here, on the road to Lake Khanko, something happened to us which was unforeseen by our commander.

Our column of trucks suddenly stopped. A heart-rending wail could be heard. We began to jump to the ground, and hurried to the head of the column, where we were greeted by a picture which I shall never forget. About a hundred women and girls, dressed in the garb of Soviet concentration camp prisoners, stood across our path and sobbed in unison. Several camp guard riflemen were scurrying around them, trying to drive them from the side of the road with their rifle butts.

According to instructions, we were forbidden to enter into any conversations whatever with concentration camp prisoners, but there was nothing to be done. We went up to the women. When we asked them what the matter was, they vied with each other in imploring us to intercede on their behalf and to demand that the Lubyanka review their cases, since all their complaints about unjust sentences had remained unanswered. After giving the women all our presents, we moved on further. The soldiers were quite dejected.

This event was not devoid of results. One of my young technical assistants, a Komsomol member, on arrival at the place where the division was to be dispersed, asked me to lend him a car so that he could fetch from the station his

fiancee, who, he said, had come from Moscow. This did not seem to ring true to me, and I openly voiced my suspicions, at which he just as openly told me that among the women prisoners he had met someone from his own village and had decided to ease her lot.

Cases of abduction of girl prisoners by soldiers in the Far East were everyday occurrences. I asked my man to give me his "Komsomol oath" that he would do whatever he did at his own risk and gave him the car. Toward evening he returned with the girl and, reporting to the regimental commander, declared her to be his wife.

The cold Far Eastern winter approached. We were ordered to "dig in," i.e., to dig homes for ourselves in the ground, since no building materials for the construction of barracks had been sent. Again the whole burden of grinding military service fell on the shoulders of the Komsomol members. They did not have the right to "grouch," as they had to give an example and cheer up the others. Diseases spread among the wives and children of the officers, and some of the wives asked for divorces from their husbands. At the Party and Komsomol meetings we were forced to admit that the moral and political mood of the soldiers and the division officers was getting worse. To the question as to why the division was not provided with normal living accommodations, the chief of the Political Section answered that these were "growing pains" and, moreover, the result of intrigues by "enemies of the people."

About this time, some of the officers and commissars who had been arrested earlier began to return. They were worn-out and tortured people. They were soon fitted out with new uniforms and sent off somewhere. They did not talk to anyone openly, but after their stay in the division the officers and commissars openly registered annoyance at hearing the expression "enemies of the people."

After this I also began to think things over more and more frequently. Was everything really as Party propaganda tried to portray it? Wasn't it deceiving us? Wasn't I deceiving myself? There was no end to the "growing pains," i.e. to poverty and injustice. The privates and junior officers swamped me with petitions asking me to help their relatives, who were reported to be in a tragic plight. They would show me letters from home, filled with worries about the next day. How could this be explained?

I wrote a letter to a secretary of the Party Central Committee, Andreyev, to ask him to take urgent measures against "distortion of the policy of the Party and the government in certain regions concerning the question of looking after servicemen's families." After a little while I was called to the chief of the division Political Section, who had just been sent to us from Moscow in place of our old chief who had been arrested as an "enemy of the people." He shouted at me and abused me for having dared to complain to the secretary of the Central Committee. "First come the interests of the state, and then our own personal interests," he concluded.

This had been said by a man who had been assigned primarily to improve the political and intellectual morale of our division. He represented the Party leadership which was supposed to correct the abnormal situation in certain places alleg-

edly caused by the intrigues of the "enemies of the people." But what distinguished him from his predecessors? Only the fact that our previous chief of the political section had not shouted at us.

However, not all of us limited ourselves merely to thinking about the situation. On one holiday, when we usually had war games to improve military techniques, the armored division was demonstrating for us the art of overcoming a river obstacle by crossing the posts of a destroyed bridge. The first tank was driven by the secretary of the division Komsomol organization, who had distinguished himself in the battles at Lake Khasan. He carried out the exercise brilliantly, then turned around and suddenly, to the surprise of everyone, dashed for the frontier at full speed. We exchanged glances: what was he thinking of? Suddenly the tank got stuck in the marsh, and our comrade jumped out with a machine gun in his hands and ran in the direction of foreign territory. We never saw him again.

After a little while we were officially informed that the former secretary of the Komsomol organization of the armored division, having betrayed his homeland, had crossed over to the Japanese with a gun in his hands. The Japanese had offered him work in their intelligence service, but he had refused, at which the Japanese gendarmes had shot him not far from the frontier.

The soldiers listened, but it was clear that they did not believe the last part.

A shortage of political workers was being felt in the army, and I was appointed head of the division political school, which contained Party candidates, Komsomol members, platoon commanders and regimental deputy political officers. The main subject was the history of the Soviet Communist Party.

In my lectures I tried to stress the first period in the history of the Party—the Leninist period. I already felt a sense of antipathy toward Stalin, and everything which I had had to go through in the last few years was connected in my mind with his name and his evil will. About this time I was elected to the district soviet of workers' deputies; in other words, I was included among those most devoted to the Party cause. At one of the Komsomol meetings my 20th anniversary as a member of the Komsomol was celebrated with great solemnity. I was presented with a jubilee Komsomol membership card, on which the date of issue was the date of my entry into the Komsomol in 1919. This touched me more than all my promotions in my work and up the Party ladder.

In 1940 I was sent to the Western frontier, where defense works were in progress. Once more, I was to organize the Komsomol members so that the plan for setting up defensive fortifications would be finished ahead of time and also to create Komsomol shock brigades. However, it was now difficult to arouse any enthusiasm in the young people. When I told them what Komsomol members had done in the first few years of Soviet rule, my charges were silent or sometimes remarked: "Those days were different."

And they were right; those days were really different. In those days our senior comrades, when they gave us an assignment, would say: "Comrades, this has to be done. On it depends the life and death of the Soviet regime." One heard quite

different things from the Party leaders of the new age. For example, a plenipotentiary of the Party Central Committee who came to visit our building site called a Party meeting and said to us: "Comrade Stalin has set us the task of having all work finished by autumn. If you manage it, you will receive an award. If you don't, you will be tried."

Certain words have the ability to imprint themselves on the memory clearly. Among those imprinted on my memory are these: "If you don't, you will be tried." Living in fear under the impact of these words, we survived to see the day when the strength of Soviet society, brought up in fear and poverty, was tested. This day came on June 22, 1941.

Our units, offering only slight opposition to the Germans, yielded before the blow and began to retreat. Retreat turned into chaotic flight. Until July 13 I tried to make for the East with a group of soldiers, but in vain. We were taken prisoner.

When I was a prisoner of war I once had the opportunity of meeting Yakov Dzhugashvili, Stalin's elder son. He was guarded by Gestapo officers and I only managed to talk to him in snatches. Yakov gave me the impression of being a retiring young man, trying not to lose his dignity as an officer in his status as a prisoner. He refused a German officer's rations and also declined to accept the offer of an orderly. To all proposals that he speak on the radio for the German propaganda service he replied: "I am just a simple officer, like the rest of those in captivity. I never did have and still do not have anything in common with my father. That is evident from the fact that I worked my way up from ordinary private to artillery captain. I was not defending my father, but my native country. Circumstances were such that I landed in prison. However, no circumstances will force me to work for the defeat of my people."

I was delighted with this answer. However, days passed, and another idea began to take root in my mind, at first cautiously and then more firmly—the idea of the possibility of defeating not my people, but the Communist regime. At the beginning of 1943 a propaganda worker of the Russian Volunteer Army came to our camp, and his speech to the prisoners of war coincided with my own views: I answered General Vlassov's call to take up arms in the fight against the Stalinist tyranny.

Years went by. In the light of freedom in the West I was able to look back over the course of my life and to evaluate it with clear eyes. There is much of which I cannot approve in what I had had to do, but I cannot reproach myself for my years in the Komsomol. They were years of unclouded faith in a great future, and years of youthful ardor. In all probability, if I had the chance of living my life over again, I would choose precisely the same course.

## Off the Beaten Track

I was born in Kronstadt on September 26, 1907. My father, who came from a peasant family, was at that time a senior warrant officer with many years of service in the Navy. Later he worked in shipyards on the Baltic Sea until forced to retire because of an injury shortly before the Revolution. He then returned with the family to his native village in Sychevka Uyezd in Smolensk Guberniya where, with his government pension, he opened a small grocery shop. A member of the Social-Revolutionary Party, he was elected to the Sychevka Uyezd Land Administration immediately after the February Revolution.

It was in Sychevka that I experienced the October coup d'état. Although I was only ten at the time, certain events are still clear in my mind.

In the early morning a crowd of two or three hundred people gathered in the market place. Most of them were craftsmen, but there were also some front-line soldiers. Carrying red banners and singing revolutionary songs, the crowd moved toward the town hall. The local authorities sent against them the one and only policeman in the town, all the "armed force" at their disposal. He was promptly disarmed and beaten up. Next the crowd, shouting "Steal what has been stolen!" surged toward the storehouse belonging to Prince Meshchersky, whose estate was fifteen miles from Sychevka, and helped themselves to his rich collection of antique military and sporting weapons. I happened to be nearby with some friends of my own age. I saw for the first time a four-barreled shot gun; it was being carried off by a peasant who was pushing his way silently and impassively through the crowd. Obviously the authority of the Provisional Government was at an end in Sychevka.

I must admit that my friends and I reacted to the looting of Prince Meshchersky's storehouse in a way that was new to us. Following the example of our elders, we went that very day to the storeroom of the former police headquarters of the town and divided up among ourselves a heap of old rusty sabers and empty revolver holsters. Armed with these, we spent several days raiding the now unprotected merchants' gardens, and fiercely hacking off the branches of fruit trees. Why we did this is anybody's guess. Probably in our childish imagination, stirred by the events, these fruit trees seemed to be remnants of the system that had been overthrown.

My father refused to cooperate with the Communist authorities. He returned to the village and took up farming. His fellow villagers had great confidence in him. He had been brought up in the Populist (*narodnik*) tradition and was always ready to help anyone both with advice and material things. This sense of generosity and neighborly feeling he passed on to my elder brother and me, which made us popular among the peasants in our village.

We got on well together in our family. Perhaps the only cause for dissension was religion. My father was an atheist, while my mother, a simple peasant woman, was extremely pious. My brother and I instinctively tended to side with her and used to accompany her to church or go on our own. We were moved by the ritual and ceremony of the church. My father considered that our outlook would change of its own accord as we grew up, and did not prevent my mother from giving us a religious education.

I first attended school in the neighboring village, in an old parish school that was allowed to remain open. In 1919, however, a Soviet primary school or, as it was then called, a "workers' school of the first degree" was established in our village. At the beginning this school was located in our house, and I naturally attended it. Klavdiya Ivanovna, a young woman who had studied at the university, was sent from town to teach us. She also lived in our house. Klavdiya Ivanovna put a great deal of love and patience into her job of teaching the village children and never begrudged the time she spent at it. In return, the other children and I repaid her with wholehearted devotion.

Klavdiya Ivanovna was often visited by her brother Leonid, a former student who had become a Red Army officer. He believed in Communism with all the fiery enthusiasm of a young idealist. He saw in the October Revolution the triumph of the people's dreams and was inclined to be optimistic about the difficulties and chaos that surrounded us. Always smart and gay, with a sparkle in his eye, he infected all those he met with his faith in a bright future.

The young teacher and her brother were the very first people who prepared me to accept the Communist idea. Perhaps Leonid was mostly responsible. As soon as he arrived, he would invite me to his room or take me for a walk and would unfold before me tempting pictures of the future when, he said, there would be no rich people and likewise no poor ones. Leonid won me over by talking to me on equal terms as though I were grown up, and by taking an interest in my opinions. What is more, he tried to explain things in terms that were close to my experience, so that abstract and complicated theories would become simple and convincing to me: "Do what you like, only don't interfere with others," or "First take care of the common good, since upon this, and upon this alone, depends your personal happiness."

In 1921, our family moved from the village to Sychevka again. I entered the Sychevka city school. It was there that I first heard about the Komsomol. During a recess, as I passed a group of older pupils, I caught a word that I could not understand. I stopped and began to listen. The discussion concerned a youth organization that was helping the young people of the country to build a new life. It was struggling against the survivals of the old order and defending the legal and economic interests of the young. This intrigued me.

I soon met and became friendly with a member of the Russian Komsomol, Zhenia Vedernikov. From him I not only found out that a cell already existed in the town, but even received an invitation to take part in the next Komsomol *subbotnik* (unpaid work-day) "for the reconstruction of the national economy."

I should mention that Sychevka is a small provincial city. In those days it had about 30,000 inhabitants — mainly small traders, merchants, artisans, and local intelligentsia. It had no industry, no “national economy” — this was just an expression borrowed from the written instructions from the central authorities.

On the day I first took part in a Komsomol *subbotnik* we had to fix up the People's House, or city clubhouse. When we had assembled, Fedorov, the secretary of the Party Uyezd committee, arrived and gave a little speech. He said the People's House had once been the place of amusement of the merchants of Sychevka and, now that the workers and peasants had become the masters of the country, it must be made into a cultural center for them; we should therefore remember, as we repaired this building without pay, that our efforts were for the workers, ourselves included.

Soon I was taking part in many other *subbotniks*, helping to tidy up the city gardens, to clear the railroad station of debris, and to cut firewood. The members of the Komsomol always came to their *subbotniks* in an organized fashion, carrying red flags and singing revolutionary songs. They all worked with great spirit, quickly and conscientiously, competing with each other in agility, strength, and endurance. The enthusiasm of the Komsomol members on these occasions was infectious. I made new friends: boys and girls who were inspired with feelings of comradeship, who were ready to devote all their efforts to the cause of the Revolution. I was attracted by the Komsomol organization, as young people usually are by any compact and purposeful group.

My parents did not object to my drawing closer to the Komsomol. My father had not yet lost the revolutionary spirit, and although he did not agree with the policy of the Bolshevik Party, he did not see anything wrong in the Komsomol.

Before long I was invited to a meeting of the Sychevka Komsomol organization. I went gladly. At this meeting Zhora Spitsin, the chairman of the Uyezd Komsomol committee, gave a lecture about the current victories of the Red Army, and told how Komsomol members in the industrial cities of Soviet Russia were making the victories possible by their self-sacrificing work in factories and plants. Spitsin spoke with great feeling, and stirred his audience with faith in the victorious advance of the Revolution. Immediately afterward several people came forward and declared their readiness to enter the fighting ranks of the Red Army.

By this time I was quite a well-developed and well-read boy. The atmosphere of the Komsomol meeting, where youth held sway and where serious political questions “on an all-Union scale” were discussed, carried me away. I decided to enter the Komsomol.

I should stress that it was not only the wish to take an active part in building a new life that led me to take this step. The fact that older members like Zhenia Vedernikov and Zhora Spitsin were soldiers in a Special Purpose Unit, and therefore openly carried pistols on long leather lanyards, perhaps played as great a part in my decision. These pistols, which to our youthful imaginations seemed to be the distinctive insignia of a specially chosen and trusted category of young people, roused burning envy in me and in my classmates.

At the same time we knew that the wearing of pistols entailed certain obligations. The men of the Special Purpose Unit normally worked at their regular jobs, but in case of any alert due to the local activities of anti-Soviet forces, they assembled at a designated spot, were handed out arms, and went off to eliminate the threat. This did not frighten us. On the contrary, in our minds the Special Purpose men were heroes ready to die in the struggle with the enemies of the workers and peasants.

In those days a partisan detachment led by a former Tsarist officer, Machenik, was operating in the neighboring uyezd of Belsk. This detachment periodically raided Assuisk Volost which was part of Sychevka Uyezd and lay in the remote depths of the forest. The partisans would hang local Communists, burn down government buildings, gather up food, and vanish into the forest. The Special Purpose Unit of the uyezd therefore had to detach operational groups to protect the volost center at Assuisk.

I remember how one evening while a Komsomol meeting was in progress, the duty officer of the Party uyezd committee burst in and announced: "Full alert. All Special Purpose men to report to headquarters immediately!"

The meeting was broken off. We all hurried to the Party uyezd office. There Fedorov announced the appearance of Machenik's detachment near Assuisk and read aloud a list of twenty Party and Komsomol members who were in the Special Purpose Unit. These were to leave immediately to give support to the Party organization at Assuisk. Those who had been picked were given rifles, cartridges, and grenades on the spot and left for their destination in five carts. I remember that many Komsomol members who had not been put on the list really envied those who had gone.

On the advice of Vedernikov and Spitsin I put in an application for Komsomol membership. What worried me most at the time was my age. I was only thirteen and, according to its regulations, the Komsomol accepted members only at fourteen and above. But I was bigger and more fully developed than is usual for my age, and my fears turned out to be groundless.

Zhenia Vedernikov strongly recommended me at the meeting, which was held in the Komsomol uyezd committee building. In his speech he said that I was the son of a Soviet employee of peasant origin, and that I had already repeatedly proved my devotion to the cause of the proletariat by my active participation in Komsomol *subbotniks*. Zhenia was supported by Spitsin. The voting began. I was so overcome with emotion that I could not see the hands being raised. Finally Spitsin announced: "Unanimously!" and my heart brimmed over with joy and pride. From now on I officially belonged to our little city's circle of revolutionary youth, many of whom already held responsible positions in the local offices of the State, or were officers of the local guard company, or worked in the uyezd branch of the Cheka.

The Sychevka Komsomol organization then numbered only about forty persons. It was based right in the uyezd committee building, since there were no enterprises or other establishments in the town in which separate cells could be



set up. The atmosphere in the organization was extremely friendly. The older Komsomol members treated the younger ones as brothers; they poked fun at our weaknesses but were always ready to give us any help we needed.

The basic form of activity of the organization, apart from the already-mentioned *subbotniks* and various assignments connected with the struggle against counterrevolutionaries, was meetings. These served as a school for the political education of Komsomol members. At each meeting one of the members would normally deliver a speech or a report about current political questions, in accordance with a plan prepared in advance. After the speech there was a discussion into which the leaders tried to draw as many as possible of those present. In this manner we learned to prepare summaries, to expound our ideas in a logical way, and to speak freely before an audience, while at the same time keeping up-to-date on all political news.

The Komsomol uyezd committee building served as a kind of clubhouse for us. We gathered there nearly every day after school or work. We exchanged news and discussed how to organize various projects. Those of us who were pupils in the city school were particularly interested in the question of changing the teaching methods. Many of our teachers continued as before and often resorted to physical punishment. This made us indignant. On the insistence of the older members, the Komsomol uyezd committee intervened to forbid physical punishment at school. But at the same time the members of the uyezd committee gave a dressing-down to Komsomol members who violated school discipline, argued with their teachers, smoked openly, or missed lessons on the excuse of being overburdened with Komsomol tasks.

Outside the organization, Komsomol activities were limited at this time to cultural education. This consisted of putting on shows and arranging concerts for the townspeople. At first we used what had been a merchant's warehouse for this purpose, and there set up a rudimentary stage and benches. Later we were given a hall in the People's House. Our interest in theatrical work was enormous. It became even greater when young people of the city who were not members of the Komsomol began to come to our theatre. The men of the guard company and also many townspeople were attracted. Admission was free, and the theater was therefore packed on the days of our productions. The subject was always in accordance with the revolutionary spirit of the time. Two plays were especially popular, one called *The Wreck of Hope*, about the life of a Norwegian fisherman, and the other, a Soviet play, *The Hornet's Nest*, about the struggle between the Whites and the Reds.

Zhora Spitsin, who headed our organization, was well mannered and extremely considerate. He not only was respected by the members of the organization, but also enjoyed considerable authority among the other inhabitants of the town. This latter fact greatly facilitated the growth of our organization. Zhora was always a model we younger Komsomol members wished to imitate. I was particularly struck by the erudition and oratorical talent of our leader. He was small and unimpressive to look at, but from the very first words he spoke he

captured the full attention of any audience, inspired it by the strength of his personality, and conquered it with his irrefutable arguments and the vivid nature of his illustrations. It was rumored in town that Spitsin was the son of a match manufacturer who had owned factories somewhere in the north. This supposedly bourgeois background made him seem all the more interesting.

Fedorov, the secretary of the Party uyezd committee, very often attended our meetings. He knew all the Komsomol members personally and always called them by name. He showed great interest in our private and social life and had long conversations with many of us. He never refused help if we needed it in our Komsomol work. This made us feel close to the Party organization of the uyezd.

Fedorov showed great tact and care in controlling the work of our organization. Only later did I come to understand why he devoted so much time to talking with us. Studying each individual personally, he was selecting for Party or government tasks those members who were the most developed politically and had some organizing talent. Later he would draw them into the Party. Many Komsomol members were sent to study at Party schools on Fedorov's recommendation. Zhenia Vedernikov was sent to a naval training school in 1922, and Zhora Spitsin was transferred to work in the Smolensk Province Committee of the Komsomol.

There were cases however when Fedorov, in attempting to influence decisions of the organization, met with serious objections from the Komsomol members themselves. In particular I remember a very sharp debate concerning the form and content of Komsomol work among peasant youth. Village Komsomol cells did not yet exist in the uyezd, but their creation had already been proposed. Fedorov insisted that they should work under the guidance of rural Party units, and that their entire energy should be devoted to carrying out the instructions of these units. This meant, in fact, the subordination of village Komsomol cells to Party cells and would have widened the gap between Komsomol members and the rest of the young people of the village. Our older members argued against Fedorov and proposed that village Komsomol cells should focus their attention mainly on organizing cultural education among the village youth as a whole: the cells, they said, should be centered around schools, village clubs, and reading rooms. Fedorov was forced to agree to this proposition, but he nevertheless insisted that the resolution should include the following sentence: "The work of the village Komsomol cells is to be coordinated with that of the local Party organizations."

Party tutelage impeded the freedom of action of Komsomol organizations and often steered the energy of youth into channels other than those that the young people themselves would have chosen. But the Communist Party already controlled such things as the financing of Komsomol work, the sending of Komsomol members to educational institutions, and the appointing of Komsomol members to State jobs; hence our older comrades had not only to accept this tutelage but also to proclaim it to be correct.

Although at Komsomol meetings we were told about all the major events in the life of the nation and the Communist Party, much that we heard remained quite incomprehensible for me and for many of my comrades who had lived only in the Smolensk countryside, because these events had no counterpart in the life of our own city. For instance, we were told about discussions in the Party Central Committee and in the Party organizations of the big cities. But we could not understand the nature of these Party disputes even though our leaders tried to keep us informed. Rumors of the Kronstadt uprising reached us, but we did not know the reasons for the sailors' disaffection. Gradually we became accustomed to this. We came to believe that Sychevka, some forty miles from the nearest railroad station, was deep in the backwoods, that Moscow could see things more clearly. We therefore reacted to all changes of domestic policy simply by our readiness to "note for information and action" (a sentence very often used in our resolutions) all instructions coming from above.

Toward the end of 1921, however, we realized that life in the nation was undergoing a radical change. Private restaurants and shops opened in the town, and the merchants who had fled began to return. Cabs appeared and could be seen at night carrying men in fancy clothes and women in low-cut gowns. This was the New Economic Policy, Lenin's temporary concession to the people's property-owning tendencies, a step backward in order to accumulate reserves for the decisive step forward.

Our reactions to this differed. The oldest Komsomol members, particularly those who had been brought into Sychevka by the Revolution and the Civil War, saw in this a return to the older order. Some of them took to drink. Some of them gave up their work in government establishments and left town hurriedly. Ferment set in also in the Party organization of the town.

I remember how the head of the uyezd police, an old Party member and a hero of the Civil War, began to appear in the streets in a state of intoxication. It came to the point where he was suspended from his job and expelled from the Party. Later I often saw policemen dragging him home half drunk, while he shouted for all the world to hear: "Comrades! Is this what we shed our blood for? For painted tarts? So that the merchants can get rich?"

On the other hand there were Komsomol members among us who saw in the new policy the triumph of the workers' and peasants' revolution. Among these was Prokhorov. A peasant's son, he had gone as a volunteer to the front during the Civil War and had earned the military order of the Red Banner. When he returned to Sychevka he took a job in a government office and, as an active Komsomol member, participated in nearly every operation against Machenik's detachment. In the autumn of 1921, under the NEP, Prokhorov left for his native village without signing off the Komsomol roster, thus in fact leaving the organization. He acquired a farm and soon became one of the most prosperous peasants in his area. I heard many years later that Prokhorov had become a victim of the campaign against kulaks and had been exiled to Naryn Krai.

I personally regarded the New Economic Policy with favor. Delicious things to eat, such as we had not seen for a long time, appeared in town. There was even a movie theater in which one could be whisked off to the alluring life of the American prairies. For me this was already a sort of conquest of the Revolution.

At the beginning of 1922, our organization was given the task of extending Komsomol work among the rural youth of our area. The Party uyezd committee asked the Komsomol uyezd committee to select a group of the most mature and active Komsomol members familiar with village conditions in order to train them as instructors for the organizing of rural Komsomol cells. I found myself among the candidates. At the Party uyezd committee we were given general instructions as to how we should behave among the peasants: we must not provoke direct conflicts or show an excess of administrative zeal, and we must stress the good intentions of the town towards the countryside. We were put in touch with the Party representatives who were also being sent to the villages for Party work, and we were given the necessary documents.

I was assigned to the Assuisk area, that most remote section lost amidst endless forests, where Machenik's detachment had only recently been roaming. The Party representative and I left early in the morning on the uyezd committee's sleigh and went as far as the first village. The rest of the journey was made in peasant carts put at our disposal by the village soviets on the strength of the documents we carried.

As soon as we arrived I worked out with the secretary of the Assuisk Party cell and the chairman of the volost executive committee a plan for canvassing the villages. Then I set out. My method consisted in assembling the young people in one village or another each evening. I would tell them what the Komsomol was and why it had been set up, describe the work of the Sychevka Komsomol organization, and call upon the young people to join.

My work was not always succesful, but I must say that wherever I went there were always some young people who listened to me very attentively. I was given considerable support by the local teachers, particularly the younger ones.

It turned out that I was forced to return to Sychevka without completing my mission. In one village, after our meeting, the young people asked me to join them at a kind of community party where the girls and boys stay up all night, dance to the accordion, sing, and play games. It is here that the lads choose the girls they will marry, and sometimes fight to the death with knives and clubs over some village beauty. When we came up to the house where the party was going on, my companions let me go first without warning me that there was no floor in the entrance hall and that one had to walk along a narrow board. Full of my own importance I strode ahead and hurtled down onto some bricks and scraps of lumber. I was pulled from the pit unconscious and with a bloody head, and was immediately sent to Sychevka on a sleigh. I wonder to this day whether this was the result of accident or design.

My report was heard at the Komsomol uyezd committee, my actions were approved, and I was even honorably excused from further expeditions into the

countryside. A note was added to my personal file: "A militant Komsomolite who has been tried in action."

Toward the end of 1923, my father decided that his natural bent was toward agriculture, gave up his work in Sychevka, and returned to his village. I accompanied him. A change had taken place in the administrative structure of rural areas. In particular, there had been an amalgamation of the volosts: formerly Sychevka Uyezd had contained 23; now these were reduced to 7. The amalgamation entailed an increase in the administrative staff of the volost.

I was taken on as a clerk in the office of the volost executive committee of Lipetsy (twenty-four kilometers from Sychevka and not to be confused with the town of Lipetsk). This, of course, did not happen without the intervention of the Komsomol uyezd committee, which was actively promoting the introduction of "militant Komsomol members tried in action" into every sort of Soviet establishment. After I had signed in at the Komsomol volost headquarters of the Komsomol, I learned that nearly all the technical officials in the volost establishments were members.

The Komsomol organization in a volost was, in those days, arranged roughly as follows: At the top of the pyramid there was a Komsomol organizer for the volost; he was appointed from above and was on the staff of the Party volost committee, so that he drew his salary from Party funds. Below him were Komsomol village and hamlet cells. The Lipetsy cell was known as a "basic" cell. Presumably this unusual designation had been given to it because it was so large—it had thirty-five to forty members—and because it set the tone for the other cells. It contained the entire Komsomol intelligentsia of the volost. Our "basic" cell was headed by a bureau consisting of three people who were elected at a general meeting. One of the members of this bureau was the secretary, who was personally responsible for the work of the cell to the volost Komsomol organizer. In electing a cell secretary we took account of the recommendation of the volost Party authorities. The other two members of the bureau were elected by us without interference from above.

We carried out our cultural and educational work in the theater set up by the local landowner on his estate a long time before the Revolution, and we also used the volost library. We put on plays and concerts in the theater with the resources of the cell and the local intelligentsia. In the library, which was run by one of our Komsomol members, there was a schedule of readings aloud from newspapers, magazines, and booklets. This was also the meeting place of various circles for drama, music, agronomy, and veterinary science. We persuaded an agronomist and a veterinary surgeon to take charge of the latter two circles. Even adult peasants began to come. The circles had some influence. Here and there peasants began to switch to improved systems of crop rotation. Certain of the more enterprising even undertook the planting of new strains of cereals and flax. A few began to keep bees, to plant fruit trees, and to breed pedigreed cattle. Needless to say, such peasants looked on Komsomol members with favor. On the other hand there were more than a few who, if they were not hostile, at any rate ridiculed us openly, because they thought that all innovations were nonsense.

Our main cause of difficulty with the peasants was our propaganda against religion. Markedly militant atheism and rowdy behavior were particularly fashionable in the Komsomol at that time. On religious festival days groups of Komsomol members marched around the churches and yelled to the strains of an accordion: "Down with monks! Down with priests! We'll climb up to heaven and chase out all the gods." At Eastertime, on Holy Saturday when church services were in progress, we organized antireligious lectures in the theater and followed these up with dances. Some Komsomol members, defying their parents, tried to take down the ikons in their homes. All this naturally made the peasants indignant. If they managed to restrain themselves and to take no action against us, it was only because they were afraid of the authorities who were on our side and encouraged us in our foolish escapades.

It was the girls who most openly displayed their hostility toward our anti-religious propaganda. When they caught sight of us they would start to sing:

Komsomol heads are made of lead,  
They're a deadly gang, the devil's at their head.

or

Komsomol noodles  
Sold God for rubles:  
With the money they made  
They bought a mangy man instead (i.e. Lenin).

Girls would not join the Komsomol. I well remember that during my whole time in our cell there were only two girl members. One of them was a teacher from elsewhere; the other had come from a neighboring village and had moved hastily to Lipetsy, where she had found work as a cashier with the volost executive committee. The religious feeling of the girls was the cause of tragedy in many romances. Sometimes a Komsomol lad who had been "tried in action" would fall in love with a beautiful girl and ask her to marry him. The girl, seeing that the boy had a good job, wore decent clothes, and was well spoken, would agree — but only on condition that they get married in church. Now the lad would have a choice before him: if he did not get married in church, it was goodbye to the girl; but if he did, it was goodbye to the cell for him. I remember a couple of cases in which love got the better of piety in so far as the girl was concerned, but that meant breaking with her parents.

I sometimes wonder now about the real reason for our antireligious feeling in those days. It seems to me that the basic cause was that the Revolution shook the countryside and disclosed many flaws in the ancestral order of things. The peasants' traditional ignorance was associated in our minds with their faith in God. Furthermore, the awakening thirst for knowledge among the young, amid the miserable standards of rural schooling, engendered in the young people a blind faith in the printed word. We were, of course, literally snowed under with anti-religious pamphlets written in a popular, easy style, and with elementary booklets about the origin of life on earth.

The cell held general meetings regularly twice a month. At these meetings we discussed reports concerning the political situation of the day — chiefly about the

plots of the "International Entente" against the Soviet Republic. We adopted resolutions in which we held the "English lords" up to shame and expressed solidarity with our "working-class brothers" abroad who were fighting for freedom. At nearly every meeting we discussed the "un-Komsomol-like behavior" of some member — one had taken part in a fight, another had got drunk at a wedding, a third had been at a party where he had been learning the Western fox trot, and so on. The Komsomol rank and file were fairly lenient toward such "un-Komsomol-like behavior;" they joked at the offender and voted for a reprimand with marked irony. The leaders, who had to carry out the instructions from above and maintain the standards of Komsomol morality, tried to control themselves and to maintain the proper official tone. I remember only a few cases of actual expulsion from the Komsomol. The reasons were marriage in church and drunkenness.

In January 1924, I was elected secretary of the bureau of our Komsomol cell. The news of Lenin's death reached us about this time. I must admit that neither I nor most of my fellow-members were particularly shaken by this event. In our minds Lenin was just one of the leaders of the Party, along with Trotsky, Rykov, Kalinin, Zinoviev or Bukharin. "Well, Lenin is dead," we thought; "it's a big loss, of course, but there are others left, and nothing will change."

In accordance with a letter of instructions from the uyezd committee, we hung out mourning flags and held commemorative meetings in all the nearby villages. We left it at that. Then we received further instructions, which mentioned a "Leninist recruitment" into the Komsomol. We again conscientiously carried out all our orders "from above": this time we held commemorative meetings exclusively for young people, calling upon the village boys and girls "to close their ranks above the grave of Ilyich." The "Leninist recruitment" gave us only a few new members. We sent in reports to this effect and then set about our usual work of cultural propagation and self-education.

In the autumn of 1924, I was named chairman of the village soviet, which embraced eight villages with a total of 600 households. At the same time, I was elected candidate member of the volost executive committee and a delegate to the uyezd congress of soviets. This advancement was entirely due to my Komsomol organization and to the Lipetsy Volost Party committee, which saw in me an efficient and active Komsomol official who had no blots on his record.

On account of my new responsibilities, I had to resign from my post as secretary of the bureau of the Lipetsy cell. However, upon the insistence of the Komsomol organizer of the volost I remained a member of the bureau of the cell and thus continued to take part in directing Komsomol work.

According to custom, as a Komsomol member who had been promoted, I reported periodically to the cell about my work in the village soviet. When assistance was needed the cell would place special teams at my disposal to help me carry out whatever campaign was then in progress. In particular, they helped in collecting tax arrears, in telling people about the advantages of state insurance of property, in ascertaining the amounts of property held by peasant households, and in fighting against illicit stills. I often called upon the cell to provide firewood for

the schools, to repair bridges and roads, and on holidays to establish a lookout system to check hooliganism and fires. In return, the cell demanded that I enlarge the network of reading rooms and Red Corners. In no way did the cell interfere with the administrative activities of the village soviet.

— The life of our cell was not particularly eventful. I will mention only one incident that comes to mind. It was either in January or February, 1925. I was summoned urgently to the volost committee of the Party where a special Party and Komsomol meeting had been called. We were addressed by a Red Army officer who had arrived from Sychevka, wearing deerskin boots. He was accompanied by an adjutant so I concluded that he was a high ranking officer. I do not remember all that he said, but he spoke about Trotsky and Trotsky's speeches against the Party, and demanded that we pass a resolution urging the removal of all followers of Trotsky from their posts in the Red Army. Those present at the meeting understood as little as I did about the struggle at the top of the Party and about the Trotskyite opposition. We thought: "If these are the instructions, that is what we must do." What is more we had already heard more than once that Trotsky did not like the peasants. We therefore voted unanimously for the expulsion of Trotskyites from the Red Army. This was perhaps the only meeting at which I took part in a resolution directed at members of the opposition.

In my new work I found the peasants were completely indifferent to being ruled by a boy of seventeen. I think this was because, first, they were already used to meeting young people in all Soviet establishments and, second, they were fully occupied with their own homesteads and took little interest in the village soviet. At the same time I, who had started on my work with great enthusiasm and pride in my appointment, very soon lost interest in it. Like any young man I would have liked to enjoy life, especially on holidays. I longed to have a drink with my friends, to sing, to dance, and to court a girl. But I did not dare to do any of these things, because my appointment as chairman of the village soviet — the head of the village and the representative of Soviet authority in the countryside — precluded such frivolity. Besides, my relations with the peasants were strained by endless clashes because they would not pay their taxes on time and evaded duties such as the supplying of wagons to move school equipment or the provision of shelter for a traveling representative of the uyezd offices.

All this brought me to a point where I asked the volost executive committee and the Party volost committee several times to relieve me from the duties of chairman of the village soviet. But these committees, in view of my efficiency, evidently looked upon my requests as mere expressions of youthful diffidence and turned them down. Finally the work in the village soviet got on my nerves to such an extent that, in mid-1926, I handed over all my duties to a member of the village soviet and, without saying a word to anyone, left for Leningrad where I had some relatives. Through them I hoped to find work.

I succeeded in getting a job as an unskilled worker in the "Kooperator" Factory. I applied to the factory Komsomol organization for help in transferring to a job that would be "cleaner." But when they found out that I had "deserted" and



had failed to sign off from the Komsomol roll they treated me with marked hostility. The wages of an unskilled worker were then one ruble thirty kopeks a day. This was not enough. I had to return to my village.

The Lipetsy Komsomol organization investigated my "case of desertion," but, taking into account my repeated requests to be released from the duties of chairman of the village soviet, merely gave me a reprimand. That was the end of the affair. I then found a job in forestry.

In the same year, just before the elections to the local soviet, my father was denounced by someone and put on the list of those deprived of electoral rights. The reason given was that he had run a grocery shop before the Revolution. My father did not accept his disenfranchisement and appealed to the provincial authorities.

Since the classification "disenfranchised" also affected the rights of all the other members of a family, the volost Komsomol organizer insisted that a general meeting of the Lipetsy cell consider the question of terminating my Komsomol membership.

To make the situation clear, I ought to say a few words about this organizer, Peter Konstantinov. He was a candidate member of the Party, and typified one type of Party bureaucrat. He regularly hardened himself by physical training, and had a truly puritanical way of life. He did not smoke, nor drink, nor dance, nor go to parties. He saw the whole purpose of his existence in the faultless execution of all Party and Komsomol directives. Naturally he was highly esteemed by the volost Party leadership and the uyezd Komsomol committee. Some of our Komsomol members serving in the volost soviet offices even tried to imitate him.

It was this stern puritan who turned up at the meeting to order my expulsion from the All-Union Leninist Komsomol, as the organization was now called. By this time I was already regarded as an "old Komsomol member." This made the case more difficult. Moreover, the provincial authorities had not yet issued a decision about my father's appeal. Konstantinov insisted on my immediate expulsion from the Komsomol, but the meeting remained silent except for individual officials of the cell who hesitantly supported Konstantinov. In the end no decision was reached.

Nevertheless, the mere fact such a question had been raised at a Komsomol meeting radically altered my attitude toward the organization. Until then I could not have imagined myself outside the Komsomol with its peculiar joys and fears. I could not have imagined that the Komsomol community, with which I had identified my innermost being, could reject me as though I was some foreign body. When I came home from the meeting I reviewed all my actions and feelings since the day I had joined. I could find in them nothing that could have justified my expulsion from the Komsomol. Then the thought occurred to me that the Komsomol was no longer what it had been, and that the bureaucratic spirit of the Party had crowded out the earlier feelings of comradeship. The letter of the official circulars had prevailed over youthful directness. This process, I reflected, had somehow missed me: my work in the volost executive committee and later as chairman of the village soviet had taken up so much of my time that I had lost contact with the inner life of the organization.

My thoughts about the change in the nature of the Komsomol were further confirmed after another incident. On one occasion I failed to attend a Komsomol meeting. The usual consequence of this was a bawling-out. This time however nobody even mentioned my absence from the meeting: it was as though I was not part of the organization at all. Then the group stopped notifying me about the meetings altogether. There was only one conclusion to be drawn— that the organization had ceased to care about one of its members. And why? Just because my father had owned a shop once upon a time? But I had never concealed this from my organization. What was it that had changed?

I had a close look at the Lipetsy organization. I visited the uyezd committee and found that the composition of the Komsomol had changed strikingly during the last two or three years. Nearly everywhere men like Konstantinov had replaced the Spitsins and Vedernikovs. The efficiency and bureaucracy of a new Komsomol generation had replaced the former Komsomol spirit of enthusiasm and creativity.

After a few months, the provincial authorities reversed the decision that had deprived my father of electoral rights. The question of my Komsomol membership became, nominally, a casual misunderstanding. The minutes of the next meeting recorded that "the conflict was settled." From my personal point of view, however, it was not settled. I could tell that the leaders of the Komsomol cell felt awkward in my presence. They began to avoid meeting me and talking frankly to me, although I bore them no grudge. Our relations took on a formal character and it became a burden for me to continue my membership. In 1927, utilizing my connections in the Komsomol uyezd committee, I joined the Navy as a volunteer. There, immersing myself in naval training, I lost all connection with Komsomol work, and finally, in 1928, was dropped from the rolls as a matter of routine. I should explain that such mechanical loss of Komsomol membership was a common occurrence and even a mass phenomenon at that time. Hence, my loss of membership affected neither my personal life nor my further advancement in the Navy.

ANASTASYAN VAIRICH

## Youth It Was That Led Us

I cast my mind back and bring to life again the years of my youth, that part of my life spent as a Pioneer and a member of the Komsomol. Events unfold themselves before me with startling clarity, and each of them is accompanied by the same melancholy refrain, in the words of the young Soviet poet Eduard Bagritsky:

Youth it was that led us,  
Sabers swinging high.  
Youth it was that threw us,  
On Kronstadt ice to die.

Chargers stampeded,  
Bore us away,  
Trampled us unheeded  
Still as we lay.

Hot our blood about us  
As we rose anew,  
Yet our eyes were sightless,  
Nothing could they view.

These words apply to the Komsomol members of the 1920s. In a wider sense they apply in the full simplicity and depth of their meaning to that generation of Komsomol members to which I belonged. Yes indeed, it was youth that led us. Youth, and youth alone, guided us and shaped our thoughts and our hopes. Soviet reality, on the other hand, dealt roughly with us. It hurled us about mercilessly, as a great wave may hurl about inexperienced swimmers. Soviet reality broke our wings and crushed our will to resist.

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I, Anastasyan Vairich, was born in 1913 in Armenia, in the city of Aleksandropol, now called Leninakan. This city, founded many years ago by artisans, lies in the Shirak Valley, on the banks of the Akhuryan River. Until the Revolution it was inhabited by tradesmen, artisans, and agricultural workers, peaceful, hard working, and pious folk, who lived well and were fond of a little fun when the day's work was over. In addition to a large number of churches, there were many candy stores and tea-houses, and from these flowed the melody of flutes and recorders at night.

In the early morning, when the townsfolk threw open their windows to greet the light of the sun rising beyond the summit of Mt. Aragats, they would repeatedly make the sign of the cross. This was due to an old tale which maintained

that a good spirit, the protector of the Shirak Valley, lived at the top of inaccessible Mt. Aragats and that, together with the angels, he watched over the townspeople's rest and saw to their welfare.

My countrymen had another custom. On Sundays, entire families, from the oldest to the youngest, would go off for the whole day to the Vartapet town gardens on the banks of the Akhurian. There they would rest, and when they sat down to eat, they would always leave places free for their dead relatives. These places were set with plates and knives and forks. The glasses were filled with wine and the plates loaded with food. The dead would be remembered at every toast, and the food and drink reserved for them would be thrown into the river, so that the waters of the Akhuryan might carry it to them in the other world.

I never saw these customs. I only knew about them from what my mother told me.

My early childhood, in so far as I remember it, was spent in peace and contentment. My father had his own smithy and made good money. My mother, who came from a small landowning family and had a fair education by the standards of those days, devoted all her time to looking after the home. I grew up knowing nothing of sorrow and evil. The world seemed sunny and clear. I had no conception of a world greater than my own. All the world that I knew lay within 23rd Street, and it seemed to me that this street began at the summit of Mt. Aragats and ran on and on to where the sun sank at the end of the day.

This careless epoch, of which I have few clear recollections, came to an end in 1918. Soldiers of Osmanli Turkey entered the city and I saw and felt for the first time in my life the triumph of evil. Two of my three uncles were brutally murdered before my eyes. Mutilated corpses lay all around. My family fled to the country to escape the massacre. My father disappeared during this flight and was never seen again. Our Shirak Valley, once so rich and peaceful, became a valley of horror and famine.

Towards the end of 1920, the Turkish troops were driven out by other soldiers. These wore strange pointed caps on which glowed red stars. They entered the city singing in a language I could not understand. The grown-ups said that they were the liberators of Armenia—the Russians from Moscow. They were followed by men of the Armenian “revolutionary army” who also marched in, singing a song that went like this:

Away Khatisyan,\*  
And never return.  
This world is ours,  
And ours will remain.

Life underwent a sharp change as soon as the Armenian revolutionary soldiers in their pointed caps arrived. Peace set in. Horrors came to an end. Goods gradually crept back into the shops. People began to breathe freely once more. I was

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\* Khatisyan was Prime Minister of the independent Republic of Armenia, founded May 28, 1918, and overthrown by the Bolsheviks on December 2, 1920.

eight by then and was able to understand the meaning of this change. There was only one thing I could not grasp: why had Khatisyan, an Armenian, to leave his native land, and why should Armenian soldiers of the "revolutionary army" want this? I asked my mother about it. She told me as much as she could about the short history of independent and democratic Armenia and about the part played in it by the brave statesman Khatisyan. But how could I, at the age of eight, make sense of things which even many grown-ups found hard to disentangle, set one against the other as they had been by the upheaval of the revolution.

In the fall of 1922, I entered the third grade of the Dalton School which had recently been opened in Leninakan, as the town of Aleksandropol was now commonly called. Until then my mother had taught me at home. The spirit of Communist Armenia dominated the school, from the method of instruction to the special talks on political subjects given by the teachers. Here we were taught to respect the "liberating soldiers of the Revolution" who, we were told, had come to Armenia to free her from Turkish bondage and help her to enter upon a new life founded upon the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity, where there were neither rich nor poor. It was stressed for our benefit that revolutionary Moscow had sent these men to Armenia, and that the Armenian people must be duly grateful. We were also told about the October Revolution which, so they said, had ended the capitalist rule and opened to the working people a broad road toward light and progress.

Much of what we were told at school we simply did not understand. We were growing up in a town of skilled craftsmen and we failed to understand, for instance, why preference should be given and leadership handed over, in the construction of a new life, to something called the proletariat. We also could not understand why some of the Armenian fighters for freedom should be regarded as enemies of our people, while others were to be loved and honored. However, we remembered and believed all that we were told for the following reason.

As I have already mentioned, as soon as the "liberators" and "revolutionary soldiers" had entered the city, life took on a peaceful pattern. By 1922, the material situation had further improved. A stable currency was then established. Confectioneries reopened, and food stores and teashops of every kind began to appear. After three years of fear and privation the people felt free again, and somehow this new life became subconsciously associated in their minds with the arrival of the revolutionary army. This feeling had an even stronger effect upon us, the younger generation. One other circumstance should be borne in mind. The songs that the revolutionary soldiers sang and the words of the speakers at the innumerable meetings contained much that was gay, adventurous, and full of faith in a bright future. All this captured our young hearts.

In the winter of 1923, my classmates and I attended a meeting of the city children at which the Leninakan Pioneer organization was formed. The first speech at this meeting was made by Pilosyan, the secretary of the Party city

organization. He told us that the Revolution could only achieve final victory if the younger generation entered the fight for a new life as children and trained itself to provide experienced and hardened builders of the new world. He also told us that in Moscow the young people of our age had already formed a childrens' Communist organization and were already "taking an active part in the struggle against the religious and bourgeois prejudices left over from Tsarist Russia." Next, the town Komsomol members who had organized the meeting showed us two portraits—Lenin and Trotsky. The former was shown as a three-year-old boy. The latter was pictured on horseback in a pointed cap and red bordered greatcoat. Pilosyan told us about the life of these two people. He described the part they had played in the October Revolution, and ended by saying that both of them put all their hopes in the younger generation. Then all those present were handed red ties. One of the organizers explained to us what these meant, and how they should be knotted. Enchanted by all that we had heard, we straight away wound these ties around our necks, feeling at the same time an ineffable reverence for their red color, the symbol of the revolutionary flame.

Pilosyan left, after congratulating us on the founding of the first Pioneer community of Leninakan, and we stayed on to hold our first independent assembly. This was conducted by the secretary of our school Komsomol organization. We were divided into sections, and each section had to select a leader. I was elected leader of one of the sections. From that very moment I felt more grown up, since, as it seemed to me, only a grown-up person could be entrusted with work of such responsibility as the leadership of a Pioneer section. At the end of the assembly, we were told to bring 7 rubles 50 kopeks each, the following day, towards the cost of Pioneer uniforms.

When my mother had listened to my enthusiastic account of how I had become a Pioneer, she asked me only one question: did I myself believe that the Pioneer organization set only worthy objectives for itself. One could sense from this question and the way it was put that she herself did not believe that this was so. But she did not address a single word of reproach to me. She looked at me in a new, almost inspired way and laid out before me the sum of money required for the uniform. I later found out that at this instant my mother had been filled with pride that I, her only son, had entered life on my own as though I were a grown-up.

The next day, we were handed our equipment: black shorts, white short-sleeved shirts and red socks with three-cornered designs at the top. The senior Komsomol pupil who had been assigned to work with us paraded us in these uniforms after lessons, and set us off marching round the school yard singing a song that we had just learned:

Campfires flaring in the blue night,  
We are Pioneers, the children of workers;  
Draw near the era of bright years,  
The Pioneer's motto is "Be prepared!"

It is hard to describe the effect that this new song had on us. The words, the exalted mood, seemed to fill our hearts with enthusiasm. We forgot about the

narrow limits of the schoolyard. We felt that the horizon had opened, and that we were marching above the city, toward the very summit of Mt. Aragats. We sang the song five times, and even then we felt like going on and on singing it.

Then the whole community got together to compose our program of Pioneer work. Even this had an attractive side. We were the masters of our own organization; we ourselves could decide what to do, without supervision by our elders and without their interference. It is true that our troop leader told us that every day we must enlighten those around us who were not Pioneers about the inhuman conditions in which the children of the workers in capitalist countries lived; that we must make it clear what the October Revolution had given to the children of Armenia; and finally, that we must explain at all times and in all places the harm done by religion. Of course, such slogans gave our young minds no cause for hesitation; on the contrary, they made us feel more important, since they gave our future work a flavor of responsibility.

This was the beginning of my new life, filled to the brim with meetings, hikes, chats around the campfire and new songs. In 1923, during the summer holidays, we went to a Pioneer camp. There we lived in tents. The wearing of the Pioneer tie obliged us to behave outside the Pioneer community in an exemplary fashion at all times. We had to respect our elders, never be afraid of difficulties, set the interests of the community above our own, always be ready to carry out any request by representatives of the Soviet regime and the Party and stand up resolutely against "religious nonsense." We faithfully observed these laws and the customs of the young Pioneers. We observed them because we were persuaded that by acting in this way we would become masters of the whole world and liberate our "class brothers" who were languishing in capitalist slavery in the West and in colonial countries.

How could we have thought otherwise? The new life had given us unprecedented opportunities. Take this example from my own experience, for instance. In November 1923, at a town meeting devoted to the sixth anniversary of the October Revolution, I, a nine-year-old boy, was given the honor of making a speech from an enormous platform which had just been erected. I was filled with delight and excitement. Just imagine—I was to stand by the side of the secretary of the Party city committee and the leaders of the city soviet. I was to speak as an equal of the grown-ups! When my turn came, Sokhikyan, the First Secretary of the Party city committee, lifted me up above the rostrum. I remember my first speech to this day:

In the name of the Leninakan Pioneer Organization, allow me, Comrades, to congratulate you on the day of the October Revolution which has brought us freedom and happiness. At this moment, when we are gathered together here to celebrate the day of our victory, the children of workers and peasants in capitalist countries are struggling in difficult circumstances to liberate themselves. Long live the friendship of the workers of the whole world! Long live the government of our workers and peasants! Long live October throughout the whole world!

When I had finished, Sokhikyan kissed me on both cheeks and then lifting me once again above the rostrum, cried out: "Here it is, the young generation, the sign of our victory!"

What else could I think at that instant except that we were starting out in life as its sovereign masters, and that the future depended upon us alone? I felt in a seventh heaven, as the saying goes. My schoolmates who stood around me envied me; among them was my former comrade, Suren Mikaelyan, who later became Minister of Education for Armenia and then disappeared without a trace during the Beria affair.

Life in the country continued to get better and better. In the morning, one could buy a whole dish of hot Armenian stew for 25 kopeks. Two pounds of the best grapes cost 20–25 kopeks, a hundred pounds of melons, 50 kopeks, the best childrens' shoes, 3 rubles 50 a pair. My third uncle, who was still alive, opened an inn at this time, and my mother worked there. What she earned was ample to provide us with everything that we needed.

It was not the material side of life, however, that interested me. I was inspired by the revolutionary slogans and was truly prepared to enter into the most determined battle to liberate the wretched children of workers and peasants in the capitalist world. And, in this connection, I worshipped Lenin, "The Leader of the World Proletariat," and all his fellow fighters.

Then, all of a sudden, our enthusiastic dreams about "the last decisive battle" were crushed. Sorrowful news reached our city—Lenin was dead. All the Pioneers, myself included, somehow grew suddenly quiet. We mourned in our hearts. The same thought throbbed in our minds: "How shall we be able to go on living without our Ilyich? What will become of the World Revolution?"

In these days of mourning, our attention turned to another man, to Trotsky, whose portrait we had been shown together with that of Lenin. At a commemorative city committee meeting, Sokhikyan, the secretary of the Party city committee, and Liparit Barsegryan, the secretary of the Komsomol city committee, said in the presence of all: "Lenin is dead, but Trotsky, the great revolutionary, will continue his work; Trotsky who led our country to victory in the Civil Wars." We listened to our older comrades and in our minds, the man in the pointed Budenny cap, astride his horse, turned into a knight of old in whose company trials and tribulations held no fear for us.

Trotsky became our friend for nearly a year. Toward the end of 1924, however, we were shown the picture of a new man, a man with a black moustache and hair brushed back from his forehead. The caption under the picture read "J. V. Stalin (Dzhugashvili)." When we asked who the man in the picture was, the secretary of the school Komsomol organization told us that he was General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party. From now on we rank-and-file Pioneers had to arrange talks at our section meetings about Stalin's revolutionary activity. Soon we were all provided with detailed typewritten accounts of this man's life.



Outwardly, right up to 1927, life underwent no change after the death of Lenin. Nevertheless, both I and my fellow Pioneers sensed that there was some friction at the top of the Party. This became a subject of unofficial discussion among us. My friend Tatevos Gasparyan, a seventh grade pupil, in particular, often talked to me about it. He was considerably older and had a better understanding of current events. "Lenin's work is dying," he would often say. It is true that our conversation about what was happening at the summit of the Party was of a purely childish nature, such as "Stalin has kicked over Trotsky" or "Trotsky will get the better of this Stalin yet," but even so, more mature alarm for the fate of the Revolution was apparent in our words.

By September 1926, when I had already reached the seventh grade, I felt politically mature enough to enter the Komsomol. Nobody influenced me in this. I wrote a declaration in the approved form, stating that I wished to fight even more actively for the bright future of all mankind and therefore intended to link my fate with the right hand of the Bolshevik Party, with the Leninist Komsomol. This declaration was discussed at a general meeting of the school Komsomol cell. I was asked whether I knew the statutes and the program of the Komsomol, and whether I was devoted to the cause of the Party. I was also asked whether I was an atheist; and there was a whole string of questions concerning the lives of Stalin, Stepan Shaumyan, Suren Shpandaryan, Aleksandr Myasnikyan, and others. I answered all these questions and then the meeting began a heated debate as to whether or not I was worthy to be a member of the Komsomol. I well remember that some of the Komsomol members spoke against my being accepted, on the grounds that I had a tendency toward extreme individualism (the truth of the matter was simply that I had once refused point blank to accept a minor part in a play). Eventually, however, I was unanimously voted a member of the Komsomol.

Soon after, about January 1927, certain events in the school cast a shadow over my joy at becoming a Komsomol member. To begin with, my friend Tatevos Gasparyan, who was already seventeen, was arrested. He was accused of Trotskyism. This was so unexpected and unusual that I could not understand what had happened, particularly since neither I nor my school mates could make out the meaning of this word "Trotskyism." Up to then we had freely discussed political subjects, and these discussions had never given any of us the idea that there might be "counterrevolutionaries" among us. We therefore came to the conclusion that Gasparyan had been arrested by mistake, and that he would soon be freed and rehabilitated. Imagine our astonishment, however, when the arrest of my friend was followed by that of Nazaryan, my former Pioneer leader, and Varazdar Arutyunyan, an active member of the school cell buro. They were both accused of being members of the Dashnak underground youth organization.

Those two events forced us to give up our heated disputes about which of the Bolshevik Party leaders was right and which was wrong. Not a trace remained of our former comradely sincerity and our youthful spontaneity.

By this time, I had already acquired a Komsomol card and a Komsomol uniform consisting of military jacket and breeches and a Sam Brown belt over the

shoulder. But I had no joy in my card or in my uniform. Rumor reached us of a purge in the Party ranks. Increasingly often, it struck me that the revolutionary era was over, and that an age of new relations in the Party and the Komsomol had come to replace it—an age of mutual distrust, of political investigation, and of the liquidation of those with other opinions. From this time on, I stopped making speeches at meetings about the unlimited freedom of the Soviet younger generation and the hard life of working class youth in capitalist countries.

In spite of all this, I did not break with the Komsomol, although I considered taking such a step. It is hard for me now to reconstruct in my mind the interlacing of thoughts and feelings that prevented me from making such a decision. I can remember thinking how awkward I would feel when I imagined myself putting my Komsomol card on the table in front of my fellow members, while they called me a coward and a deserter. I also remember that the thought of giving my enemies food for mockery and slander held me back.

In 1928, I finished the eighth and last grade of the Dalton School and entered the Leninakan Industrial Technical College.

There were roughly 180 students altogether in the college. Some 120 to 150 of them were Komsomol members. All the Komsomol members took part in the general Komsomol organization of the college. There were no separate cells for each course. The entire organization was led by a buro consisting of seven elected members and headed by a senior course student, a mature young fellow and a staunch comrade. He went about his Komsomol work with enthusiasm, even though one could feel that he was by nature a "non-Party" individual.

The organization met roughly twice a month. These meetings had a business-like and friendly quality about them. Questions of study and progress were discussed, and the Komsomol members acquainted themselves at the meetings with the latest resolutions of the Party Central Committee. In the main, the practical work of the organization consisted in helping local industrial undertakings to carry out their industrial and financial plans, and in teaching illiterates, while a portion of the members were permanently employed on work with the Pioneers. I should like to dwell in slightly greater detail on these various aspects of Komsomol activity.

For our work in helping with the industrial and financial plan our organization was affiliated to the Leninakan Textile Plant. Every day, after studies were over, a group of 20 or 30 set out for the plant. There the Komsomol members worked for four hours as part time workers without receiving a single kopek for their labor. The work was unpleasant and consisted chiefly in picking over cotton. Every Komsomol member among us was obliged to do four hours of "labor service" a week. In addition, on free days, the Komsomol organization as a whole set out for more work on the nearest sovkhoz. I will not pretend that "the struggle for the industrial and financial plan" aroused any particular enthusiasm among us. We went and we worked, if only to avoid hearing adverse remarks read out about us at the Komsomol meetings. Of course, our organization was quoted as an example for all, and the press of the Republic carried articles about us, but this made very little real difference.

During term time, some of our Komsomol members were assigned to individual blocks and buildings in the town in order to help fight illiteracy. Their first duty was to establish which of the inhabitants of their section were illiterate, and then, after they had finished their studies, to visit their charges and teach them to read and write without difficulty. In the summer months every Komsomol member was detailed to a pasture field, where he had to teach the old shepherds and their boys. I well remember how in 1929 our organization undertook that each Komsomol member would teach not less than 45 people. That summer, I, too, had to teach illiterates on the pastures in the valleys around Mt. Aragats. I had to combine my work among the illiterates with propaganda activity, explaining the decisions of the Party and the government to the peasants, and preparing them for collectivization.

The inner shock that I had suffered in 1927 was gradually being smoothed over. I became one of the active Komsomol members in the college. My main Komsomol task was to work with the Pioneers; in charge of the Pioneer Base of the Dalton School from which I had been graduated, I took great interest in my work. Not long after, in the spring of 1929, I was elected to the buro of the college organization for my active work with the Pioneers, and on the eve of the summer vacation the college put forward my name as a member of the town commission for the organization of Pioneer summer camps. By this time I was already a permanent reporter on the staff of *Avantgarde*, the Komsomol newspaper of the Republic.

My job as a reporter came about in the following way. When I entered the college I got to know a classmate called Ervant Kazaryan, a young writer who used the pen name Ervant Maikyan and who had excellent contacts with certain members of the editorial office of *Avantgarde*. I was myself trying to write poetry at this time and I had a great desire to see my verse in print. When Kazaryan found out about this he advised me first to send to *Avantgarde* a few small items about the life of the Komsomol organization in town, and only to send poems after I had established some sort of relationship with the editorial office. I followed this advice. My notes about the work of Komsomol school organizations in Leninakan were immediately published. I began to write regularly for the paper and received in return a fee of 120 rubles a month. This was a large sum in comparison with our stipend; we only received 75 rubles in those days. However, it was not so much the economic aspect of this which attracted me and turned me into a permanent contributor to the newspaper. It was the effect on my morale. I found it extremely pleasant that everything that I wrote promptly appeared under my own name in print. My poems, too, began to be published in *Avantgarde*. By this time I received each month from the editorial offices letters of instruction indicating the subjects to which priority should be given. During the first half of 1929, the fundamental subject of my reports was, in accordance with instructions, the part played by the Komsomol organizations in the struggle for the fulfillment of the industrial and financial plan. We were required to highlight all the favorable aspects of the plan, but nevertheless the main emphasis was laid on shortcomings and breakdowns.

My work on *Avantgarde* gradually moved me into the front rank of the college Komsomol. The city committee of the Komsomol, at that time headed by Aram Grigoryan, began to regard me as "one of the boys." I established particularly close and friendly relations with Khosrov Matevosyan, the chief of the Pioneer department and a great enthusiast for this work, who reacted very warmly to my proposal to found a literary circle for all the pupils of the intermediate schools and technical colleges in Leninakan. I set up this circle with Matevosyan's help and took a leading part in its activities.

Active Komsomol work, the constant queries connected with it, and my daily contacts with the officials of the Komsomol city committee, all gradually helped to correct my former political doubts. What I had experienced in 1927 no longer appeared in quite such dark colors. I no longer felt that I was at a dead end politically. I came to think that the events of that year were merely passing difficulties in the development of the country. When I wrote in *Avantgarde* about the imperfections in the work of the Komsomol organizations in the city, I was genuinely anxious that the work of these organizations should improve. Only one thing worried me slightly—how to write about the enthusiasm of our Komsomol members at the textile plant, an enthusiasm that we simply did not feel, because work at the plant took up a great deal of the time that we needed for study, tired us physically, and held no spiritual reward.

The autumn of 1929 set in. The director of our technical college, Ovsep Karakhanyan, an Old Communist who, until 1927, had held responsible appointments in the People's Commissariat of Armenia (he had been head of the Leninakan District Department of Education), but had later been demoted because he had been married in church, received an assignment from the Party city committee to form a special student team and to set out into the countryside with it to carry out a campaign of mass collectivization. This he refused point-blank to do. As a consequence, he was severely reprimanded for infringement of the Party line and removed from his post as director of the college.

This event, which perturbed us Komsomol members, was the forerunner of a new era, the era of collectivization in which the Komsomol was given a not insignificant part to play.

At the end of September a directive reached us from the Komsomol city committee: we were to form the most "politically reliable" Komsomol members into five propaganda teams and put these at the disposal of the city committee for use in the collectivization campaign. The bureau of the organization set about carrying out this directive. Endless meetings were held. Selected candidates were summoned to these meetings in order to find out their views about collectivization, and, after prolonged discussions, to extort from them consent to go to the country. It was suggested that I, too, should go.

I felt no particular enthusiasm about this proposal. Having spent some time during the summer on pasture lots and in villages as part of my propaganda and anti-illiteracy work, I was well aware that the peasants would not agree to part with their land and their property of their own free will. The political circum-

stances were such, however, that I could not produce any good reasons to refuse to go to the country. I tried to use ill health as an excuse, but this was not taken into account.

When the necessary number of candidates had been selected (some fifty or sixty people were needed), a general meeting of the college Komsomol was called. Gerair Kalashyan, the secretary of our buro and a candidate member of the Party, gave us an address on roughly the following lines. Communists faced the task of creating a classless society; an essential step towards this end was the collectivization of individual small peasant homesteads, since individual peasant proprietors with their views on private ownership presented a threat that capitalism might return to our country. These peasants were still not sufficiently enlightened to understand this for themselves and were afraid to part with their bits of land. It was for this reason that the Party had decided to send out to the countryside the more responsible Communist comrades from the cities so that they might carry out the necessary educational work among the peasants and lead them toward a collective economy.

Immediately after this address those of us who had been selected to go to the country were presented to the Komsomol members of the college. We were introduced as enthusiasts of collectivization who had voluntarily answered the Party's call.

Then we set off for the Komsomol city committee where an assembly of all the Komsomol propaganda teams in town had been called. We were addressed by the secretary of the city committee. He repeated everything that Kalashyan had said, but added that we should be proud of the confidence that the Party placed in us and of the honor conferred upon us by our selection to the first rank of the organizers of collectivization. He then introduced each team to the head of the propaganda and agitation department of the Party town committee.

Kalashyan headed my team of nine people. We were given a route through the village of Great and Little Keta situated some 15 kilometers from Leninakan, and we went on foot. When we arrived at the village, we called at the village soviet and introduced ourselves to the soviet chairman and the local Party cell secretary, who had already been warned of our arrival. Together, we decided to call a general meeting of the inhabitants that very night.

All the peasants gathered that evening, and the meeting was opened by the chairman of the village soviet, a Party member. He explained to those assembled the advantages of a collective economy over individual management. The next speech was by the Party cell secretary who said much the same. The main emphasis was placed on the fact that under private ownership it was difficult to use complicated agricultural machinery, and that this had an adverse effect on the size of the crops. Kalashyan spoke last. His speech had a fatal effect. He began quietly but, noticing skeptical smiles on the faces of peasants in the front row, he soon began to raise his voice and finished his speech with these words: "We are offering you entry into the kolkhoz as a voluntary gesture. But it is obvious that some of those present do not understand the meaning of freedom. I am therefore

forced to warn them that the Soviet regime is sufficiently strong to crush any resistance and to put the peasants forcibly on the road to collectivization!"

At these words there arose in the hall a noise like the mooing of cows; it was the peasants who, without opening their mouths, were expressing their contempt for the threat.

The meeting ran on until midnight. One could see quite clearly from the comments of the peasants and from their questions that they had no conception whatsoever how one could possibly part with one's own farm. The organizers of the meeting then began to call them up one by one to the table and suggest to them that they should sign that they were entering the kolkhoz voluntarily. It was only the village activists who signed, however—that is Party members and Komsomol members who owned some land.

A conference of the village activists was called the next day. Everybody was at his wits' end. It was decided to consult the Party city committee by telephone. The city committee replied that if the entire village was not collectivized by nightfall every local Communist and Komsomol member, as well as the members of the special team, would immediately be expelled from the Party and the Komsomol.

The peasants were again assembled. But there was no longer any pretense of a meeting. The noise and shouting were overwhelming. Without allowing the chairman to get out a single word, the peasants declared that they would never surrender their property and that they wished to be left in peace once and for all, otherwise the business would end in bloodshed.

Subsequent events took a truly tragic turn. Kalashyan again got in touch with the Party city committee and asked that a detachment of militia be sent to the village. The peasants, however, somehow managed to find out about this, and when a truckload of militiamen arrived in the village a couple of hours later, it was immediately surrounded. The truck was soaked in kerosene and went up in flames. Several militiamen were knocked down. Without awaiting the outcome, Kalashyan marched us back to Leninakan on his own responsibility.

When the secretary of the Party city committee had heard our somewhat incoherent report, he raised an outcry and threatened to have us all arrested. By this time, however, reports from other villages had also begun to come in to the city committee. All of them told of the peasants' resistance. At this, the secretary of the city committee calmed down somewhat and dispatched us to the village of Ortakilis nine kilometers from the town, "so as to give us a chance to redeem our crime of desertion."

The trials that we encountered here were more serious than those in the first village. We had not even reached the village soviet building, before we were surrounded by peasants. "Go back where you came from," they told us, "if you value your heads." We succeeded, however, in getting into the village soviet. There we found the soviet chairman who told us that the first team who had been in the village the day before had been forced to go away empty-handed. Some of

the peasants had already begun to slaughter their cattle. The local activists were powerless. The only remaining possibility was to demonstrate before the peasants voluntary entry into the kolkhoz by the activists themselves.

We seized upon this idea, naively imagining that the example of the village activists might prove infectious for the other peasants. The activists, all ten of them, started to drive their cattle toward the village soviet. The peasants muttered and jeered at them. Some of the members of our team tried to enter the house of a peasant who lived next to the soviet. We began to try to persuade him to join the kolkhoz, but he refused on the grounds that nobody else would join. Then one of us, imagining that the peasant was merely hesitating, threw a rope over the horns of a cow and began to pull it towards the building of the soviet. This was obviously all that the peasants had been waiting for. Blows rained down on us. Anything that came to hand was used as a weapon. Covered with blood, we retreated into the village soviet building and locked the doors. The street resounded with threats to burn us together with the building. The village soviet building was cordoned off by the peasants.

We sat in the building until morning. Many of us, including myself, had head wounds. At dawn, when our besiegers had gone home, we emerged from our fortress and made our way back to town.

This war with the peasantry lasted two months in the Leninakan district and there were some casualties, among them the secretary of the Party town committee who had called us deserters and who was severely beaten up in a village. Yet, according to rumors that reached us, resistance to collectivization had been most acute in Zangezur Raion, where it had taken the form of an armed peasant uprising.

The trip into the countryside changed our outlook. We had been eyewitnesses of the fact that the Party's policy was not in accordance with the mood and the wishes of our peasantry. We were thoroughly unhappy to have taken part in raw violence against the peasants. And the worst of it was that we could not refuse to carry out Party assignments, since this would have meant a betrayal of the Communist cause and would have had the most regrettable political and moral consequences. What we had experienced, however, proved to us that it was wrong to keep silent, that we must somehow react to all that we had witnessed and taken part in. As a result of this mood an illegal handwritten paper called *The Bubble* appeared at the college. It gave a satirical description of the entire Odyssey of our march into the countryside and repeated word for word all that the peasants had said about kolkhozes, including their more unprintable remarks.

This paper, which contained more than one hundred pages, was passed from hand to hand by the students. It was copied and became available to a large number of people. As a result, of course, the offices of the OGPU became interested in it. Its authors were soon discovered. I and a now fairly well-known Armenian Soviet playwright, Aleksandr Araksmanyan, were among them. A show trial was organized. Fortunately for us, the trial took place at a time when the Party Central Committee had already realized that a temporary withdrawal was

necessary, and when Stalin's article "Dizziness From Success" was obviously already in preparation. The sentences were relatively mild. Araksmanyán was sentenced to one year of forced labor. I and Ervant Maikyan, the nephew of the then secretary of the Central Executive Committee of Armenia, Ruben Dashtoyants, were merely expelled from the college and the Komsomol in view of the fact that we had been active contributors to *Avantgarde*. Even this sentence was soon repealed at the request of Stepan Kurtikyan, the editor of *Avantgarde*, and a reprimand was merely entered on our personal files.

After the publication of Stalin's article "Dizziness From Success," which explained that forced collectivization in the country had been due to the deviations of local Party officials, our spirits rose again. This article provided an exhaustive answer to all our doubts. I again went about my Komsomol work with zest. In the summer of 1930, I was sent as a Pioneer leader to the Pioneer camp Kyzylkoch, where I took charge of a Pioneer base. A base embraced four Pioneer troops, and there were three of them in the camp. Presumably my Pioneer work was considered satisfactory, since I was again sent to the camp during the summer of 1931. During all this time I kept in contact with *Avantgarde* and was given a special correspondent's card for the paper in 1932. At the time, I was asked to become a permanent member of the staff in the correspondence department which was run by my close friend Grai Ovsepyan. I refused this offer because I was afraid that it might prevent me from entering a university.

Meanwhile the work of the college Komsomol organization had become more varied. More attention was paid to physical training and sport, and our organization began, in particular, to take a great interest in parachuting.

In June 1932, I successfully graduated from the industrial college, and in August of the same year I passed the entrance examination for the Erevan State University and enrolled in the department of history.

By this time I was already in the full sense of the word a grown man with a fair experience of life and politics. As soon as lectures began, it was this very experience that gave me a critical attitude to all that was happening around me. I am not speaking of the ordinary difficulties of life that are part and parcel of a student's existence everywhere and at all times. These were easy to understand—the wretched stipend, the lack of food, and the cheap threadbare clothing. What I could not reconcile myself to was the regime established in the University by the Party and Komsomol organizations. We students had no opportunity to voice our thoughts and observations openly, and we were unable to express our opinions anywhere on even the simplest question. The only opportunity for self-expression was offered within the framework of these organizations, in which the spirit of official cant and formalism reigned supreme, and where the incantations of the current Party directives replaced living student thought. But this was only half the trouble. All our free time was taken up by meetings, conferences, talks and reports, which bore no relation whatsoever to our studies. These meetings and sessions bored all the students to such an extent that Dzhaankir, a contemporary of mine and also a Komsomol member, once lost his temper and said: "If I had



known that I, a history student, would have to study Party and government decrees at the State University, I would have done better to stay in Alla-Verdy, my hometown, and go on working down a mine pit."

The cant which was imposed on the University by the Party and Komsomol organizations had the effect of evoking among the students a purely nominal attitude both to Komsomol work and to the organization itself. We realized that the continued presence of every single student within the confines of the University depended upon the favor of the Komsomol authorities. Outwardly, therefore, we observed Komsomol discipline and even tried to show off our activist spirit. In our innermost selves, however, we drifted farther and farther away from the Komsomol and tried to use every spare minute for the benefit of our education. This was true of nearly every Komsomol member, and there were 500 of them out of a total of 850 students. It was equally true of me.

I arrived at the University with good recommendations from the Komsomol organization of the college and from the Leninakan city committee of the Komsomol. On the strength of these recommendations I was elected a Komsomol group organizer at the very first meeting of the Komsomol group in my course. After a little while, still in 1932, when it became known that I was a special correspondent of *Avantgarde*, I was elected a member of the history department organization buro. In actual fact, though, I did no serious Komsomol work. All my activism consisted in putting a great deal of effort and time into the *Student Shock Workers*, the University newspaper on the editorial staff of which I had begun to work. I was in charge of the literary section of the paper, and so my work was in fact of an academic nature. This went on until December 1934.

The shot fired at Kirov, which heralded an era of cruel terror throughout the country, strained the atmosphere even more in our university and made it intolerable and corrosive. For nearly four years, until the spring of 1938, our Komsomol organization had tossed about as though in a fever. Special meetings were called nearly every week, and sometimes several times a week, to investigate the personal case of one Communist or another who had fallen under suspicion of sympathizing with opposition elements, or of harboring nationalist tendencies. The orgy of purges and arrests demoralized us.

We could not understand what was going on around us. Individual members of the Party and the Komsomol prowled in the passages and in the lecture rooms in those years, listening to every hint given by the students and to every whisper. They then came forth at the next meeting to make yet another denunciation. We had to be present at every meeting, and we were forced under the threat of reprisal to vote for the exclusion of our own comrades from the Komsomol and from the University. The University Komsomol committee was forced to confirm all resolutions for the expulsion of members voted at department meetings, even though Aram Airapetyan who headed it was an extremely sympathetic individual who was kindly in his attitude towards the students (he was a law student, but was going through the University "free," or in other words as a paid official). It was those who listened and watched who set the tone of the meetings.

Some hundred members were expelled from the Komsomol in 1935-37. All these were also excluded from the University. Some of them were arrested. Dzhaankir, whom I have already mentioned, was among those expelled. It turned out that he had said to someone: "All the same, a monument in honor of Ashot Ovanesyan will be erected sooner or later on the square of Abovyan," when Ovanesyan had been declared a nationalist bourgeois by the press (he has now been rehabilitated as an old Communist and is back at work in Armenia). Gurgun Vaganyan was expelled because he had said somewhere or other: "Nevertheless it was Bukharin, and not Stalin, who was right." Another student, Ruben Por-sugyan, and his wife were expelled because his brother, the well-known literary critic Gurgun Vanandetsi had been arrested as an Armenian nationalist.

In 1937, Aram Arapetyan, the secretary of the University Komsomol committee was removed from his appointment, presumably because of his passive attitude toward the campaign for the "eradication of enemies of the people," and later allowed to drift away from the Komsomol altogether. His place was taken by a student of economics, Gurgun Petrosyan, a narrow minded, brutal and crude individual who had won his fame by his detection of enemies of the people. After this, the purge of the Komsomol organization became even more widespread and unwarranted. Even *Avantgarde* was forced to declare in the fall of 1937 that groundless expulsions from the Komsomol university organization had reached unprecedented and intolerable proportions.

The Party and Komsomol campaign to uncover enemies of the people, the fear, emotion and despair connected with it, all deflected the students from their work and prevented them from concentrating on their studies and on getting to know their research sources. But this was not all. In the period of 1935-37, the Party and Komsomol organizations broke rudely into the purely academic side of University life. Lecturers and professors, too, now became the targets of the hunt for "enemies." The contents of their lectures, which were interpreted by the activists of the struggle against the "enemies" in their own way, were frequently submitted as evidence against the teaching staff at general Party and Komsomol meetings of the University.

I particularly remember at this time the case of Professor Vagan Rshtuni who lectured on the history of the nationalities in the USSR. At one of the regular meetings he was accused of adhering to the so-called Pokrovsky school. In particular, he was accused of playing down the importance of Peter the Great and overstressing that of the Novgorod commune. After this, one of the University's Komsomol activists, Partizuni, a third year law student and later a well-known Soviet Party literary critic, published a long article in *Avantgarde* calling Professor Rshtuni an enemy of the people. In protest the indignant professor refused to take his part in the final examinations and declared that after Partizuni's attack the only thing for him to do was to go of his own free will to the house in Mikael Nalbandyan Street (the NKVD Headquarters). This he did. And spent six months in the NKVD cellars.

Partizuni also used the medium of *Avantgarde* to attack the well-known Armenian philologist Grachi Adzharyan, and the orientalist Ashkarbek Kalantaryan, whom he accused of failing to base their lectures on Marxist principles. They were arrested and deported.

At the very height of the purge, during the spring of 1937, notices began to be handed around at University Party and Komsomol meetings stating that the Rector, M. Engibaryan, was "covering up" the enemies of the people and was unwilling to help in cleansing the University of hostile remnants. Finally, in the autumn of 1937, he was removed from his post and was arrested soon afterward.

The purges in the Komsomol and the Party, as well as the destruction of the Armenian intelligentsia during these years, caused me to adopt an acutely negative attitude toward the policy of the Politburo. I began to feel a real aversion for the Komsomol, or to be accurate, those of its organs which had fallen into the hands of people like Petrosyan. Already by the spring of 1935, when I received instructions from the head office of *Avantgarde* that I must concentrate all my efforts on denouncing the enemies of the people, I not only stopped sending articles to the paper, but drifted away from all active participation in Komsomol work.

A strong influence which contributed to deepen my inner breach with the Komsomol was that of my fiancée, a student of the Erevan Pedagogical Institute, who became my wife in 1935. Her father had been a weaver with his own workshop. In 1928, he had been forced to hand over his workshop to the State and to become a textile worker in a factory, while she had been forced to enter the Komsomol in order to complete her higher education and acquire a reasonably secure position in the Soviet scheme of things. She nursed a burning hatred for the Party whose policy had forced her to act against her own conscience and convictions. She gave me to understand almost from the first day of our acquaintance that she was an enemy of the Soviet system because it destroyed the human personality. I could find no sufficiently weighty arguments to counter her opinion when I discussed it with her. She demolished my verbose statements about the need for sacrifice in the name of a bright future, by pointing to the life around us. In the end, she became for me a person with whom I could talk freely, both about my personal doubts and about my hesitations.

My drift away from active Komsomol work did not pass unnoticed by the members of the Komsomol organization, even though my wife and I still conscientiously attended Komsomol meetings. I was frequently reproached with this at these meetings. On such occasions, however, I invariably gave the same reply: "I am a senior Komsomol member. For eight years I have given my youthful enthusiasm to the Party and the government. The time has come when knowledge is needed as well as enthusiasm. I want to become a scientific worker. Therefore, I am devoting all my time to study. This does not contradict the aims of the Komsomol, it is in accordance with them." It appeared that our Komsomol leaders did not dare to contradict this formula, and so they left me in peace.

I did not have the courage to break with the Komsomol for good. I was afraid of being accused of "deviation" or of solidarity with "enemies of the people," and this could have been followed by complications, among the least serious of which would have been expulsion from the University.

I was graduated in the fall of 1937 and stayed on at the University as an assistant lecturer. In October 1939, however, I was called away to school work, owing to the mobilization of teachers for the army. I found myself in my native town as the director of the Khachatur Abovyan Secondary School. I had left the Komsomol, having passed the upper age limit. By this time, I had reached the conviction that it was impossible to influence the policy of the Politburo in any way, and that it was profitless to try to struggle against it. A straw is easily broken, and one had to take things as they were. One would have to exploit these tiny opportunities that the Soviet system left open, so that sooner or later the people might become strong and organize their life in their own way. With these thoughts in mind, I zealously set about my teaching work, particularly since, by 1939, the life of the country had returned to a more or less peaceful groove. Even in this mood, however, I was to encounter new disappointments and new fears. One of my friends who found himself working for the NKVD warned me in confidence that a new campaign against the enemies of the people was being planned throughout the country.

I do not know how I would have behaved. It so happened that World War II broke out just about this time. In spite of my age, the military recruiting office did not consider it necessary to call me up, and my exemption was prolonged until January 1942. I remained at Leninakan. The male population of the city melted away before my eyes. Soon there was hardly anybody left who had been born between 1900 and 1921. I do not know why, perhaps because I was inspired by a feeling of patriotic duty, or perhaps because I was ashamed to remain in town when all the men had gone to the war, but I informed the recruiting office that I wished to go to the front without waiting for my exemption to expire.

I found myself in the Crimea as a member of the staff of *In the Trenches*, a front line newspaper. My first articles were addressed to my son Felix. I gave him fatherly advice: to treasure that which had sent his father to the front, to fight for the inviolability of Russia and the happiness of her people. I never completed this series of articles. I was taken prisoner on November 31, 1941, near Dzhankoi, where we had found ourselves inside a tight ring of German troops after a hopeless battle that had lasted four days. One month later, Molotov declared for all the world to hear that the Soviet government did not recognize prisoners of war. This was the last stroke that put a sharp twist into my future fate. At that moment I finally understood that I would have to become an emigre and break forever with the Party dictatorship that had renounced me in my most difficult hour, just after I had fought my last round in its defense.

## Through the Eyes of My Youth

When I think of my past it is with mixed feelings of pride and regret. I am proud of having dedicated my youth to the search for truth, but I regret that I did not search for this truth where it was to be found. I respect those people whom the Soviet system has still neither crushed, nor corrupted morally, but I envy them, too, because I cannot excuse all of my past.

I was born in 1913. My family were Tatar farmers, living near Yekaterinburg in Siberia. We were neither rich nor poor. We had four or five horses, seven or eight cows. Our village was 150 kilometers from the capital of the raion and 250 kilometers from the capital of the okrug. It was entirely a Tatar village.

Before the Revolution of 1917 there was no serfdom and there were no landlords among the Siberian Tatars. There was plenty of land, and each man used his land as he saw fit. Taxes were not levied on the land, but on each farm household. They were so insignificant, however, that the population hardly felt them. Inequality in the use of land, water, and forest was completely incomprehensible to the Siberian Tatars. This is why the attempts of the tsarist government to settle people in Siberia, as it had on the lands of the Volga Tatars, were not successful. Russian refugees in Siberia found it difficult to get accustomed to the free life. They could not imagine how it was possible to have as much land as one liked and to live in peace without the constant interference of tsarist officials. They willingly adopted the Tatar way of life and did everything they could to maintain that life.

The Siberian Tatar farmers were known for their laziness, generosity, hospitality, honesty, and religious fanaticism (we are all Moslems). Before collectivization they usually worked only in the spring and in the fall. The remaining time was spent taking walks, celebrating, arranging weddings, and visiting one another. The land was so rich that they could live well without working too hard. So the Siberian Tatars were only astonished when they heard the Bolshevik slogans of the October Revolution: "Land for the peasants" and "Bread for the hungry."

After the outbreak of the Civil War our village was sometimes occupied by Bolshevik detachments, sometimes by Kolchak's soldiers. The overwhelming majority of the Tatars favored maintaining the old pre-revolutionary order, and were hostile to the Communists.

Until 1926 I studied in the village elementary school. Right up to 1924 we were taught by old local teachers, who, influenced by the Revolution, were rather nationalistic. We used Arabic-language text books published in Kazan in 1917, at the time when there were strong tendencies toward separating the Tatars from

Russia. The main purpose of these texts was to impart to the Tatar children a feeling of national pride and religious fanaticism. The gist was approximately: "You are a Tatar. Therefore you must be honest, obey your elders, and believe in Allah." Or: "What kind of people were our Tatar ancestors? They were warriors, noble and courageous."

For the 1924-25 academic year we were sent a new teacher, a Komsomol member who had just completed his education courses. The first thing the new teacher did was to tell us more details about the Revolution, about Lenin, Trotsky, Bukharin and other Soviet leaders. He tried to organize a Pioneer club in the school and a Komsomol cell in the village, but his attempts were unsuccessful. Our elders made it quite clear to the teacher that if he tried to make Pioneers of the children, they would stop sending them to school. Our parents did this because all Communists, including Komsomol members and Pioneers, were atheists. They would say: "The Communists have a star, but it's red and there is no half-moon [the symbol of the Moslem faith], and this doesn't suit a Tatar." We children, seeing that our parents were against the Pioneer organization, obediently agreed with them: "If the elders say that being a Pioneer is a sin, then it really is a sin."

With the 1926-27 academic year I started in the Tatar-Bashkir intermediate school in Tyumen, where I quickly joined the Pioneer organization. As far as I can judge now, three things prompted me to do so. First, I wanted to be among the best, and in those days one read that the Pioneers were the best of the best children, that the Pioneer was an example everywhere, that "the Pioneer is the one who is ahead in everything and always." Second, I was genuinely interested in the Pioneer work itself. There were 200 Pioneers in our school. They took part in sports and games, went to concerts, and took hikes on nice days. The Pioneer induction ceremonies, the symbolism, the ritual also attracted me. Third, I was from the country. Everybody laughs at a country boy in the city. The Pioneer organization appealed to my wounded pride. I not only wanted to be the equal of the city boys, but as a country boy I wanted to be above them.

I did well in my studies. I had a good memory. Also, the excitement and amusements of the city did not attract me. Hence I was able to devote all my time to study. I moved ahead and began to attract attention. I was made leader of a Pioneer unit and then promoted to chairman of a Pioneer council. This gave me some authority and filled my heart with pride. Now I was commanding city children, and they did not dare laugh at me.

My conscience bothered me because, fearing their reproaches, I hid from my parents the fact that I had become a Pioneer. I was greatly relieved when my mother herself asked me if it were true that I had become a Communist. One of our townspeople visiting the city had seen me on the street with a red tie around my neck. I told her the truth. She did not reproach me, but expressed her fear that it was possible that the Soviet regime would soon collapse and then I would be in trouble. As best I could, I tried to persuade her that the Soviet regime was stable and that there was nothing to fear. Here the conversation ended.

It was at Tyumen that I first began to doubt the religious training that I had received in the village school. The anti-religious propaganda that was distributed

was mainly responsible for this. But when I returned home for vacations and again saw my village with its quiet rural life, its honesty, its healthy humor, gaiety, and incorruptibility, my doubts took another direction. My year in the city taught me to hate its crowdedness, its dirt, its glitter, hypocrisy, and commercialism. I tried to get at the bottom of this difference between the city and the village. I arrived at the conclusion that the difference lies in the fact that the city is atheistic and the village religious. This was no consolation, however. I was confronted with a paradox. On the one hand, I considered religion a faith in something which does not exist. On the other hand, I considered this faith the basis of a healthy life.

The next academic year, 1927-28, I entered the Komsomol organization. Shortly after my return from vacation in September 1927 I was called into the school office. The school Pioneer leader, a teacher who was a Komsomol member, and a representative of the Tobolsk Komsomol Committee were seated in the office. They told me that it was necessary to put new life into the faltering Komsomol organization which was suffering from the graduation of the last class. They asked me if I were willing to become a Komsomol member. I had known that there was a Komsomol organization in the school, but I had had no interest in its work and I had given no thought to joining the organization because I considered myself too young. The invitation pleased me. It appealed to my desire to be important among the school leaders, and I already knew that the best Pioneers became Komsomol members. This invitation also impressed me because it proved that I was considered outstanding among the students. I agreed to become a Komsomol member and was immediately given a form to fill out. The Pioneer leader and the teacher then signed it to show that they were recommending me to the Komsomol.

As I expected, because of the recommendations I encountered no difficulties when my application was discussed at the Komsomol meeting. I knew all forty of the Komsomol members who were at the meeting, and felt in no way ill at ease before them. I was called to the rostrum and asked why I wanted to become a Komsomol member. I replied that I wanted to be in the front ranks of Soviet youth. They asked if I had ever been penalized in school or in the Pioneer organization. They asked me about my promotions and then unanimously agreed to accept me. I was not particularly excited as I left the meeting. I only understood that now I would be held more accountable for my actions and conduct. This did not frighten me, however. On the contrary, it gave me greater strength.

Until almost the end of 1929 nothing remarkable happened in the life of our Komsomol organization. The membership stayed around forty or fifty, mostly students from the upper classes. Several teachers were also Komsomol members. The secretary of the organization was an upper class student, and the members of the Board were also students. We held meetings once a month. In these meetings we discussed questions concerning studies, discipline, and educational and cultural activities in the school and in the city Tatar club. From time to time the Komsomol members were sent to solicit magazine subscriptions among the local residents.

Committees were formed among the older students to check on activity within the Komsomol organization. These committees conducted preliminary hearings of Komsomol students who were charged with violations of the rules. The decision of the groups was turned over to the Komsomol Board for examination. If a Komsomol member was convicted of smoking or drinking, he was severely dealt with. His punishment might even be expulsion from the organization.

In the fall of 1929 there was a wave of expulsions. All Komsomol members who were considered "class aliens" by birth, that is, children of well-to-do farmers, or merchants, or religious functionaries, were expelled. Our school was not spared. I was left with contradictory feelings. On the one hand, I knew that the move to "cleanse the Komsomol of class aliens" was dictated by important governmental considerations. On the other hand, these Komsomol members were often the most active. I saw no advantage in removing Komsomol members who, by their very act of joining the Komsomol, broke with the classes from which they came, and had very little to do with their own relatives. This was the gist of my argument at a school meeting where the expulsion of Fakhrutdinov, the son of a kulak, was being discussed. Shortly thereafter I was summoned to the city Komsomol committee where I was severely rebuked for "political irresponsibility." They gave me something to read through and assimilate. I left the city committee building dissatisfied, and decided that the committee members themselves did not understand what the expulsion campaign in the Komsomol was all about. It occurred to me that since we were isolated from the main centers of the country, our men had things all mixed up, and that somebody from on top would straighten the matter out without fail. This thought reassured me. But not for long.

Ever since I had been a small child I had always dreamed of becoming a farmer. As a student in the city, I dreamed for hours on end of how I would have horses, fields to work, how I would build my own house and what my farm would be like. I wanted to study agriculture and veterinary medicine, in order to be an exemplary farmer. I dreamed about marrying a pretty, modest, diligent farm girl who would be faithful to me, and whom my mother would respect. It was for this reason that I was uninterested in the city girls. They seemed neither suited for nor capable of work. No, I did not like the city. When I saw the small merchant treat with mockery and condescension the farmer who had come to the market to sell his goods, my dislike for the city turned into outright hatred. This scornful attitude toward the man who feeds the population irritated me. I often thought that the city people would die, were it not for the farmer. I prided myself on the fact that I was the son of a farmer, and for that reason considered myself above the others. Among the inhabitants of the city I respected only the students, doctors, and those people who really worked for their living. I thought that only they were useful to society, after the farmer, of course. In other words, I considered my future occupation to be a settled matter. But all my plans were fated to crumble.

In the beginning of 1930 a friend from my village arrived to attend courses for Soviet rural workers. He was two or three years older than I. He told me the latest news, and, in particular, how our village was being collectivized. What he



told me made me shudder. He described the general confusion and fear of our villagers, and said that they were all forced to go to the woods and cut down the trees. He said that all the horses had been confiscated by the kolkhoz, my favorite horse included, and that the villagers who tried to remain independent met with repressions. I was in despair. All my dreams of the cultured country farmer came tumbling down like a house of cards. Life lost its meaning for me. I was unable to sleep and stopped studying in school. Why should I study now, I asked myself. It was in these black days that I wrote my first poem, "To My Village." It was not a polished literary work, but I poured my entire soul into it. I addressed myself to the fields, the flowers and the lakes. I told them that I wanted to return to them and live among them as my forefathers had done, only better informed and richer, but, unfortunately, this was now impossible. Further on, I begged forgiveness for deserting them and then sincerely told them that parting from them was like parting from my own being. I brought this poem to the editors of the local newspaper who criticized it for being "kulakish." When I said that I was a Komsomol member and the son of a kolkhoz member, they softened their tone a little and advised me to write about the new village, the village on the road to collectivization. I understood that the conditions of my life had changed, and that it would be necessary for me to adapt myself to them.

Our Komsomol organization was made up mostly of students and did not at all feel affected by the new events in the villages. The Komsomol members who like myself came from these villages kept their feelings to themselves. My inner feelings were rarely reflected in my relations with the Komsomol. I thought that the Komsomol organization was a youth organization which helped the Party, and rightly so, but which was not at all responsible for its political actions.

In reconsidering my future, I decided that the kolkhoz life, with its dependence on the government, and the absence of private ownership of the land and the products of labor, would not suit me. The idea then occurred to me that I might become a village school teacher. At that same time Stalin delivered his famous "Dizziness from Success" speech which relieved my confused mind. Before this speech I suspected that the entire Party system was implicated in the terror against the villages. Now I realized that the excesses, threats, arbitrariness, outrage, and plain petty stupidity practiced against the farmers were to be attributed to the minor Party officials. Gradually the sharpness of my reaction against the "uprooting of the kulaks" lost its force and my thoughts calmed down. I was left only with a personal unwillingness to work on a collective farm.

Many new schools were opened in 1930. The country began to sense the deficiency of its educational facilities. It was at this time that the Komsomol called upon its former members who had been teachers and who had then entered other fields to return to teaching. At the same time an appeal was made to the young intellectuals to attend special courses and to become teachers too.

At this time I was in the eighth class. Graduation was accelerated in our school. I was in a group of eighth-class students who were sent to attend teachers' courses at the main Tatar schools of the Okrug Department of Public Education.

Altogether about forty people took part in these courses. Half of them were Komsomol members, and three or four were Party members.

On the second or third day after the opening of classes, we were visited by the representative of the Tyumen Komsomol Committee. A meeting of Komsomol members was called, and a special Komsomol cell at the courses was formed. I was elected cell secretary. I was elected not because I had managed to distinguish myself in two or three days of classes, but rather because we were a whole group from the Tyumen school. The other Komsomol members were from various places and did not know one another. When my former classmates nominated me, everybody agreed.

Our cell was directly under the Tyumen Komsomol Committee whose secretary was an energetic, cultured young lady, Miss Medvedeva. She was a native of a Siberian village and had already completed a two-year Party course. Since she considered the preparation of young teachers to be of vital importance, she saw to it that we had adequate material conditions. She would often come to our courses, and inquire about the life in the other raions or discuss various problems.

Our Komsomol cell here was passive in the full sense of the word. Its functions were limited to collecting membership dues. There was, however, nothing unusual in this. Since we were preparing to become teachers, our studies took up all our time. It was unnecessary to check on the progress of the students, or to prod those who lagged. Every student knew that soon he would be teaching, and thus tried to compile the maximum amount of course material. Since we were given political courses in the school, it was unnecessary to form any kind of political theory groups in the Komsomol cell. In our social science courses we were taught faithfulness to the Party's "general line" and to Stalin. Our teachers explained to us just where the error of the "rightists" lay, and they proved the advantages of socialism over capitalism. They spoke at length about the economic crises abroad and about the growth there of workers' revolutionary movements. We tried to master this material as well as our regular course material, since the social sciences were of equal importance with the other material in determining final grades.

Although, as I have mentioned above, our cell was very inactive, I often had things to do at the city Komsomol committee office. I had to take care of the dues, keep the minutes of our meetings, and look after our treasury books. Through this activity I became a city Komsomol committee activist. I was one of those Komsomol members who were known personally, who were accepted as equals, who were invited to *aktiv* meetings, and who enjoyed certain privileges. This played a large role in my future Komsomol career.

I studied from April until September in 1930. In September I was one of the outstanding students who was graduated ahead of schedule and was named an assistant teacher in the Tatar elementary school of a lonely and remote part of Uvat Raion. I had to travel on a river boat for more than a week in order to reach my new station. Before winter it was impossible to reach the place by any other means of transportation because of entirely impassable swamps.

The people of the village engaged in fishing and hunting only. No one had the slightest notion of agriculture or even of truck-farming. Not many animals were raised. In summer almost the entire population went fishing in boats, and in winter they went to the woods to hunt. There was a store in the village which exchanged food, wares, and hunting necessities for fish and pelts. Before 1929 the people here had lived very well. But then collectivization took place. A fishing and hunting collective was created. The prices of fish and pelts fell sharply while the prices of foodstuffs rose rapidly. The people lost all desire to work. The young people began to think about leaving home. But special Soviet deputies made sure that the people complied with the Party directives, so, whether they wanted to or not, the villagers had to work.

Before I left for the village the Uvat Raion Komsomol Committee gave me instructions to organize Komsomol and Pioneer groups in the village. The same instructions were given to all young teachers.

Upon my arrival I began to carry out the instructions by forming a Pioneer organization. First I called a meeting of the leading students, and told them about the Pioneers. The idea of an independent youth organization which would provide entertainment for the young people, which would have its own clubhouse, which would organize a lot of sports, and which would present plays for the adults, appealed to them very much. After this I called a meeting of all the upper class students and told them what I had told the others. Then they signed up for the Pioneers according to classes. At first I directed the work of the organization. A room in the school was set aside for a Pioneer corner. Through the cooperative we ordered a drum, a bugle, and a flag. A drama circle was organized. By November 7 we had begun to work on a play to show to the parents. This excited the children very much. However, the parents, disturbed by collectivization, were very indifferent. "Nothing will help in times like these," they would say.

Having gotten to know my Pioneers pretty well, I began to form the Komsomol organization. I selected six or seven of the more competent students. One of these I managed to send to a business school, and another I placed as a salesman in the cooperative. Thereafter it was a simple matter to talk with the other students. What I said to them was something like this: "You don't want to work on the kolkhoz forever. You would like to get ahead. The Komsomol will help you to further your studies." I did not say anything about Communism or socialism. It was not necessary. The young people were eager to leave the village. They seized at my offer to join the Komsomol as a drowning man clutches at a straw. That was all I needed. I never even thought about educating them in the spirit of Communism. I thought that would come of itself, since "one's conditions determine one's thinking."

In this way I succeeded in putting together a Komsomol cell of six or seven members. I directed their activity myself and handed over the reins of the Pioneer organization to one of the Komsomol members. There was no need to carry on any special activities. The village led a quiet, retiring life. Nevertheless, we did set up a reading room for the adults where magazines and newspapers

(months old) were on hand to be read. One Komsomol member was sent in the evening to the homes of the kolkhoz members to tell them the latest news heard on the radio.

I had nothing to do with the raion committee, which was located far from us. The villagers summed up the distance by saying: "The old man Devil measured and measured this distance until his rope broke. Since then no one has tried to measure it again." It was only at the end of November 1930, when the swamps froze over, that I traveled by sled to the Raion Department of Public Education. I arrived there just in time to be on hand for the plenum of the raion Komsomol committee. I was not in time to hear the main report, but I remember that the debate which followed was about the role of Komsomol members in helping the kolkhozes fulfill their state delivery quotas. I spoke myself. The raion committee was not at all interested in the work or the life of the Komsomol members in the outlying regions, I said. As an illustration, I cited the story of the old man Devil who refused to measure the distance to our village, and finished by saying: "Is it possible that the Komsomol is weaker than the old man Devil?" My talk was a success. The other Komsomol representatives from the villages supported me. The meeting ended by my being accepted into the raion committee staff and made a delegate to the okrug conference.

After my speech at the plenum, a raion committee instructor came to our village. He was a flabby city boy who had just been graduated from the Party school, where they filled him with horror of the rural "class enemy." He addressed the young people, warning them to be vigilant against "class enemies." He was afraid to go out on the street during the evening, and stayed home in bed without changing his clothes. Our Komsomol members saw through the weakness of the raion committee instructor and began quietly to snicker at him. A former revolutionary fighter who loved to sit with the young people lived in our village. He gave the poor fellow from the raion committee no peace. At the slightest incident he would call out in warning: "Hey, you there, be more careful. The class enemy isn't sleeping, you know." In defense of the instructor, it must be admitted that he helped me straighten up the Komsomol business records. He showed me how to keep the minutes of our meetings, and the financial records. He organized the procedure of taking in and releasing Komsomol members. But when this instructor attempted to make his changes in the life of our village, only chaos ensued. For instance, he persistently urged us to destroy the minaret (a turret from which the people are called to prayer) which was connected with the former mosque. A school had just been installed in it. When I told him that it was not a minaret, but a fire tower which also served as a place for the antennae, he looked dubious. Actually I wanted not to offend the old people who had once worshipped at the now closed mosque. The old revolutionary fighter then said to him: "All right, we can destroy the minaret. But when we do that, the old people will cut off your head." Our instructor friend then departed.

In the middle of December 1930 I traveled to Tyumen for the okrug Komsomol conference. There were many topics to be discussed since it was shortly before

the Ninth Komsomol Congress. The basic question to be discussed was the role of the Komsomol in increasing kolkhoz productivity. The formation of special Komsomol brigades and the creation of model "Komsomol land plots" were mentioned. Most of the people who did the talking were people from the city who knew very little about the problems of agriculture. This irritated me. Quite a bit of the discussion at the conference was devoted to the question of the so-called "right-wing bloc" of Lominadze, a former Komsomol leader, and Syrtsov, the chairman of the RSFSR Council of People's Commissars. A local judge gave a report on this subject. His report seemed to imply that we delegates had not tried to understand this opposition in the Party, and, furthermore, that we were not able to understand it. The judge tried to convince us that Syrtsov and Lominadze did not mention the "successes of the socialist attack," were frightened of its "difficulties," and therefore were in the camp of the "rightists," although they tried to appear leftists. Generally the judge's report was concerned with unmasking the opposition and their "double-dealing."

The conference brought me nothing new. The problems that were discussed did not at all concern my teaching work or the life of my village. The unmasking of the "Syrtsov-Lominadze bloc" really was of no interest to me because this "bloc" (there were so many of them) operated in far-off Moscow and Leningrad, where life was completely foreign to me.

When I returned to the village I was even unable to give the Komsomol members a clear explanation of what I had heard. I was unable to give a reassuring answer to their basic question, would they be sent to further their studies, since the emphasis of the conference had been on the work of the young people in the kolkhozes. My news depressed them.

However the fact that I had created a Pioneer and a Komsomol organization in my village, that I was made a member of the raion committee, and that I had been present at the okrug Komsomol convention basically influenced my future career. The Raion Department of Public Education listed me as an "outstanding teacher," although from the point of view of age and teaching experience I stood far below my older colleagues. I was elected to the presidium at a teachers' conference, and, in the summer of 1931, I was transferred to another school in the raion and promoted to principal. My pay was seventy-five rubles a month, twenty rubles more than I had received as second teacher.

I knew to what I owed this promotion, so at my new job I immediately began to form a Komsomol organization, although I had received no specific instructions to that effect from the raion committee. It was not a very difficult job. There were already a few Komsomol members in the village. They belonged to the Komsomol organization in a neighboring village, a much larger organization with its own club house. The Komsomol members of my new village disliked this because of the distance they had to walk to attend the meetings, and because of the traditional rivalry between the two villages. They felt that they were always forced to restrain themselves. Taking advantage of this situation, I proposed the formation of our own organization in the village and a reading

room where the young people would be able to pass their leisure time. They took to my proposal at once. After an organizational meeting, I traveled to the raion committee and had our organization ratified. My activity in the creation of village Komsomol organizations was then noted in my personal Komsomol file.

Having become the principal of a school, I seriously began to improve my own knowledge. The Komsomol members and the village children all came to me with all sorts of questions, political questions included. This forced me to take an interest in Party literature. I began to study the works of Lenin and Stalin in detail. Under the influence of my reading, I began to see that the "socialist attack," which had once disturbed me greatly, was a necessary stage in the reorganization of the country on socialistic principles. I began to understand that in order to attain general prosperity it was first of all necessary to develop socialist production and supply it with advanced techniques. I began to see that it was necessary to reeducate the peasant in the spirit of collectivization, to eradicate his property consciousness, to teach him to think of the interests of the state as a whole, and not only of his farm. In this connection I began to look at collectivization in an entirely different light.

In April 1932 the secretary of the Party organization of the Raion Department of Public Education invited me to become a member of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks. I had not yet thought about entering the Party. I had to give an answer, and to decline was impossible, for that would certainly have entailed some unpleasant consequences for me. Further, I had to consider if I would be willing to put the Party policies into practice without wavering and without doubts. At the same time I was aware that the Party would open up new horizons in my personal life. In short, after a little thought, I agreed and was shortly thereafter accepted as a candidate member. Outwardly, my entrance into the Party had no effect on my work in the school and the Komsomol. Inwardly, I felt more secure because I was a member of the Party in power. I was still drawn towards the Komsomol, however. It was more immediate, more stimulating, and closer to my heart.

At the end of August 1932 the Uvat Raion Komsomol Committee sent me, as an activist, to the Urals Communist University at Sverdlovsk. There were three departments in this university: the Komsomol Department, which prepared Komsomol workers for raion and okrug committees; the Party Department, which prepared Party workers for the same work; and a General Department, which prepared people for raion and oblast councils, trade union specialists and people's commissars. I was in the General Department.

The most varied nationalities (Siberia has many) were represented at the university. The atmosphere was exceptionally friendly. No one felt any kind of national enmity. Some students, from the Party's upper crust, did try to impose some sort of formality. Their criteria were neither friendship, nor spontaneity, but the letter of the law, the letter of the Central Committee's resolutions. It was fashionable at that time to hold up the exclusive rights of the national minorities.

The students of the university were materially very well provided for. We received a stipendium of 250 rubles. There was a store at the university where students could buy clothes and other things at reduced prices.

The main courses at the university were Party history, economics, the bases of Marxism-Leninism, history, and geography. The university had an excellent library with a large reading room. The main method of work was independent study of original texts.

Here, within the walls of the university, I became imbued with a faith in the possibility of building socialism. At that time, the inhabitants of Sverdlovsk received foodstuffs only on ration cards. They ate poorly. But I attributed this to the fact that kolkhoz production was not yet in full swing. Walking through the city I saw many Ukrainians and Kazakhs who had come to the Urals, begging in the streets. We asked for an explanation of this in our classes. We were told that these were people who were accustomed to live off the labor of others, who did not want to work in the kolkhozes. I could not believe this totally, but I recognized that there was a grain of truth in it. When I asked the refugees why they had come to the Urals they replied that they were running away from the kolkhozes. I was no stranger to these feelings. I had had these feelings myself, once, but had overcome them. Letters from home telling me that it was impossible to live on the crumbs that the kolkhozes paid, did not at all dismay me. I attributed the catastrophic situation to the lack of experienced agricultural managers and their inability to organize production, and reeducate the people. Now the only thing I wanted to do after my graduation from the university was to work in a village.

As a student at the Communist University, I was registered with the Party and with the Komsomol. However, I only worked for the Komsomol. I was elected to the editorial board of the Komsomol newspaper.

The university's Komsomol organization was set up in the following manner: In every department class there was a Komsomol cell. In our department class there were fifteen to seventeen Komsomol members. The class cells were under the course Komsomol organization. Finally, the course groups were under the university Komsomol organization.

The basic question at the cell meetings was the organization of socialist competition for better scholarship. The Komsomol organization carried on work outside the university. Komsomol students were sent as lecturers to the evening schools for working young people, to the technical schools, and to the workers' clubs. Sometimes the Komsomol organization arranged *subbotniki* (student work days on free time or holidays for which we received no pay). In the fall of 1933, for example, we went to a neighboring kolkhoz to pick up potatoes.

The event I remember best of all the Komsomol activities of that time was the "mock political congress" that was held in the Sverdlovsk Engineer's and Technician's Club in February 1934. This mock political congress was organized by the oblast Komsomol committee. The evening was organized in the following way. At the main table a jury was seated. Spread out on the table were slips of paper on which were written questions dealing with the Seventeenth Party

Congress. Each institute Komsomol organization had picked its own delegate to represent it at the meeting. The chairman then would call one of the delegates and ask him, blindfolded, to select his topic for a short report. Immediately upon having drawn his topic, the "speaker" was supposed to talk upon it. Afterward he would be questioned. In this mock political congress I had to speak on Molotov's report. I managed to distinguish myself in another line, however. When one of the "speakers" gave his report on kolkhoz construction, I challenged him. I objected to his speech, not because he failed to express faithfully the Party's point of view on the problem of kolkhoz construction, but because I had my own ideas on this subject. The crux of the argument was, who should control the kolkhoz machinery, the kolkhoz or the machine tractor station? The Party line was clear in this case, the MTS should control the machinery. I proposed to supply the kolkhozes with their own tractors. During my talk, I was frequently interrupted by the jury with cries of "Come now. Just think!" But I stuck to my opinion and presented many eloquent examples in defense of my position. Now I understand that my speech, which reflected the feelings of the farming members of the Komsomol and the Party, conflicted with the policy of the Party which wanted to keep control over the kolkhozes through its control over the MTS. Not dreaming of attacking the Party line, I was only expressing my sincere belief that if the kolkhozes had their own equipment they would be better off financially, and the people of the USSR would be better fed. I have no idea what helped me, perhaps it was a reference to Lenin, but my speech produced no bad effects. Moreover, I was given a small Komsomol library as a prize for my speech on Molotov's report. Kemala Sharipov, the secretary of the Komsomol Central Committee, was present at this mock political congress.

The purges that began right after the Seventeenth Party Congress necessitated rapid replacements in the Party ranks. Our university graduated some students ahead of schedule. They wanted to use me in the People's Commissariat of Public Education in Sverdlovsk. But I protested strongly, maintaining that I only intended to work in a village. I was then summoned to the Ural Oblast Party Committee. After hearing my arguments about the necessity of filling the ranks of the villages with qualified personnel, they told me: "We admire your intention to work in the village. But a person who does not belong to the Party can work as a teacher. You are a member of the Party. You have worked your way up from the bottom. You know the spade work well. The university prepared you for theoretical work. For this reason we are sending you to a village, but on Komsomol work, as secretary of the raion committee.

It was with great reluctance that I went to the Ural Oblast Komsomol Committee for my instructions. The director described in rather general lines the practical duties of the Komsomol rural raion committees, mainly about mobilizing the young people in order to increase kolkhoz productivity. He sent me to the oblast committee instructor who acquainted me with procedures and the major organizational work. Then they assigned me to the Velezhan Raion of the Ural Oblast.



The raion center to which I was assigned was located in a large village. All the raion buildings were on one special street. This street was made up of the houses of "uprooted kulaks." (Later I learned that these homes had been brought there from all the villages of the raion.) The raion Komsomol building was in one of these former kulak houses.

Upon my arrival I went first to the secretary of the raion Party committee and then to the chairman of the raion executive committee. I did not like the Party secretary. He was exquisitely dressed and was always looking at himself in the mirror. The raion executive committee chairman was the exact opposite. He had been one of those trial workers sent to the villages in the first years of collectivization. He called me by my first name, and said that I should not hesitate to call on him if I needed anything. As I was leaving he said: "Take care, my boy, you are our new generation. But don't carry your nose in the air, and have respect for the people."

Then I went to the raion Komsomol committee. A buro meeting was scheduled for the evening. I was introduced to my future subordinates. The meeting was opened by the head of the agitation and propaganda department. He announced that I had been sent to the raion committee in order to strengthen the office with my experience and offered to do all he could to help me carry out my duties as secretary of the raion committee. The motion was approved, for all of us knew that it was a mere formality, and that the decision to name me secretary was made at a higher level. Thus my work as the "young lord" of the raion began.

At first I was deeply interested in my work. There were about 60 cells in the raion with from 650 to 700 Komsomol members. I visited all the main centers, got to know the activist members, gave many talks for the young people, and tried to ignite the humbler cells with "Komsomol fire." When the representative of the raion committee appeared in the village, the Komsomol members would take a keen interest in their work and introduce very business-like resolutions at their meetings. As soon as he left, however, their fervor died down. The motions were left hanging, there were no more Komsomol meetings, and even the Komsomol members themselves seemed to forget that they were Komsomol members. While trying to get an insight into the mood of the Komsomol members, I discovered that many of them were secretly longing to leave the kolkhoz and find work in the city. This wish was at cross-purposes with the plans of the Party Central Committee. The Komsomol young people of the villages were called upon to work in the kolkhozes. In this situation it was of course futile to speak of "Komsomol fire." Gradually I became convinced that it was impossible to enkindle them once they had lost their desire. My Komsomol work began, therefore, to be merely a routine. My interest was no longer in the "Komsomol fire," but rather in how I could make my reports appear more satisfactory for the okrug Komsomol committee. I began to give my greatest attention to the procedure of the raion committee. From time to time I would give a report to the raion Party committee buro. No special intelligence was required to draw up

a report. All that was needed was a little bit of information about the life of the young people, spiced with names, places, and dates. From time to time the Party committee showed an interest in our minutes. We sent them our folders, and then got them back.

In August 1934 the raion Komsomol conference was held. At this conference a "critique" was made of the work of every raion committee worker. The word "critique" is in quotation marks because we would draw up the critiques ourselves. We did this because the higher-ups considered a conference without a critique an "inferior conference." The Komsomol worker who wanted a good evaluation for his work had only to make prior arrangements with certain members who would then say nice things about that particular individual in their speeches. A critique would go something like this: "The secretary of the raion committee attended two of our cell meetings. But what did he do? He would give a report, slap two or three Komsomol members on the back, and then leave. He could do nothing concrete for us." To the uninitiated such a critique might appear devastating. But the representatives of the higher Komsomol bodies regarded it in an entirely different light. The main thing for them was that the raion secretary was not sitting still, but was visiting the lower organizations. The governing powers knew very well that the secretary was unable to help these organizations concretely. Was the raion secretary himself going to fulfill the plan for the fishery collective? Therefore, with the blessing of the okrug committee representative, I became a candidate for the new raion committee staff, and was elected secretary at the first plenum. The other members of the raion committee buro were also re-elected.

After this conference, our raion committee continued to function in its old, uninterested, bureaucratic way. Even when we received special orders from the okrug committee, there was no change. For instance, when the okrug committee sent us orders to form brigades in the local organizations in order to put a check on the pillage of kolkhoz goods, we sent the appropriate orders to the local cells. When we received reports that these units had been formed, we were satisfied. Only twice did we really have to do anything. The first time was to mobilize the Komsomol members for fishing, since their unwillingness to take part in the fishing was threatening the plan. All the raion committee men went through the villages and threatened the kolkhoz members with exclusion from the kolkhoz unless they got to work. The second time was when the raion Party committee deputized us to go to the villages at threshing time in order to make sure that the government got its share of the grain.

Frankly, at the time of my visits to the major Komsomol organizations in the very beginning of my raion committee work, I had not had enough time to get to know the details of kolkhoz life. My main concern was finding out the state of mind of the young people. I was thinking about what we could do to help the Komsomol members reform village life and give the village a true socialist spirit. Now, in my function as Party commissar to make sure that the government got its grain with personal responsibility for the fulfillment of the grain quota, I realized for the first time that the kolkhozes, in that form which the

Party forced on the village, had nothing to do with the socialism that we had studied in the Communist University. I saw that kolkhozes do not create wealth for their members, but are rather a special way of binding the people to the land in order to exploit them. I wondered why they had kolkhoz managers and made attempts to organize collective production, when the government took grain away from the kolkhozes according to its own plans, when the grain was taken, not according to the harvest, but according to the amount of land, and the kolkhozes got only what was left after the state plan was fulfilled? Now it again became clear to me why the kolkhozniks were reluctant to work in the fields. It was not because of the alleged "peasant irresponsibility," but because the kolkhozniks realized that the state, hiding behind legality, would come along and rob them in broad daylight.

It was my job to see that the kolkhozniks set aside none of the grain that the state appropriated. I threatened reprisals. I had to make kolkhozniks thresh by night under the light of lanterns. I had to make children work around the clock. Had I not done so, I would have been arrested myself. But I returned from the kolkhozes morally defeated, troubled about the fate of the peasants, and my naive faith in the "socialism" that was being built.

At the end of November 1934 the raion Party committee once again sent me to the kolkhozes. I was supposed to inspect the basis of lumber procurements. Early in December I met the chairman of the raion executive committee, who was also going around the raion for that purpose. We were just getting started in our conversation when a raion committee courier came up to us and announced, "Kirov has been killed!" This made no particular impression on me. I knew very little about Kirov, except that he had said at the Seventeenth Party Congress: "We have achieved really great successes . . . One wants to go on living in these circumstances." I associated this statement about "successes" with my job as raion committee official and Party supervisor. For this reason, I thought to myself: "Well, he's dead and that's a shame. But another will take his place, and he too will shout about 'successes.'" The raion executive committee chairman responded to the news completely differently. He had known Kirov personally and said that he had been an exceptional man who had said what he meant. He then told me that Kirov had done a lot to better the lot of the Leningrad worker. When he heard that Kirov had been killed, he just stood there for several seconds, then picked up his cap and left.

The shooting of Kirov opened a new phase in the history of the Party and Komsomol organizations. In February 1935 I received a package from the okrug committee containing a copy of a printed, numbered, secret letter to all Party organizations from the Party Central Committee dealing with the need for increased "political vigilance"; instructions from the Komsomol Central Committee to have this letter studied in the Komsomol organizations; similar instructions from the okrug Komsomol committee. Both the instructions from the Komsomol Central Committee and the okrug committee insisted that we study the Party Central Committee letter and urged us to cooperate in cleaning

the Komsomol organizations of the Trotsky-Zinoviev infiltration. The completely new tone of the instructions bothered me, as did the unusual character of the demands they contained. I did not know what to do. At the same time I was summoned to the raion Party committee. The secretary of the raion committee gave instructions to call a meeting of all the members of the raion Komsomol committee who lived in the vicinity and also those who were the most dependable in regard to the Party. The secretary concluded: "We will disseminate the secret letter of the Party Central Committee." The raion Party committee was taking the initiative into its own hands and unconditionally setting about carrying out the instructions of the Party secretary.

After acquainting the active Party and Komsomol members in the raion with the contents of the Party Central Committee letter, the head of the raion Party Agitation and Propaganda Department gave instructions to the editor of the raion newspaper to carry an editorial on the need of increased "political vigilance." The raion Party committee chose certain of its members to conduct Party-Komsomol meetings in the outlying districts. The full text of the Party Central Committee letter was not given to these Party members. They only used quotations from the letter at the meetings. Then, on the orders of the raion Party committee, we organized group meetings of the Komsomol propagandists. Several representatives of the Party gave reports in which they urged our propagandists to make each Komsomol member politically alert and to denounce all those people who opposed the Party line. Then expulsions from the Party began. A teacher who maintained in a discussion that Kirov was not killed for political purposes, but for personal reasons, was removed from his Party rank and from his job. The okrug Komsomol committee bombarded us with letters repeatedly asking if we were doing all we could to purge the Komsomol organizations of all infiltrated "foreign elements." These letters boded no good, since there had been no purges in our Komsomol organizations. Who, in our villages, could have been connected with the Trotskyites or the Zinovievites? Since there had been no purges, we, the raion committee workers, could have been charged with "stultifying political vigilance." In order to save my own skin, I could have dreamed up charges against people who were completely innocent. But my good fortune was followed by bad.

The sowing campaign approached. However, because the kolkhozniks were unwilling to work, the sowing was delayed. "Because of failure of the spring sowing campaign," all responsible raion leaders were expelled from the Party in May. The chairman of the raion executive committee was brought to trial. I was also expelled from the Party, although, obviously, I had no direct responsibility for the agricultural situation.

Expulsion from the Party automatically included expulsion from the Komsomol and, in my case, dismissal from my post as raion committee secretary. I was not even called to the raion Komsomol committee buro meeting, where my case was decided. I was only told to turn in my Komsomol card.

For six months I was without work. All doors, as soon as it was known that I had been expelled from the Party and the Komsomol, were closed to me.

Finally, after much distress, I was reinstated in December 1935. I began to work for the People's Commissariat of Public Education.

As I mentioned earlier, my experiences as commissar in the kolkhozes left me disillusioned with the Party kolkhoz policies and doubtful if it were really socialism that was being built in our country. At this time I also saw that the Communist Party was being transformed into the personal tool of a dictator. This feeling strengthened in me after my expulsion from the Party. As long as we made sure that the state plans were met, everything was all right, and we were clothed and fed. But as soon as we no longer forced the kolkhoz members to be ready for the sowing, we were thrown to the wolves. It was for the ideal of socialism and general prosperity that many people had died, and that I had entered the Party. Before my very eyes this dream was turning into a monstrous present in which no one, not even members of the ruling Party, could be sure of the future. I wanted to scream. But fear stifled my will, forced me to restrain myself, for I understood that had I raised my voice it would have meant death for me and for those near me. When they took away my Party card I felt relieved: I returned to common humanity. I was freed of my unpleasant duties of forcing other people to do things. But days passed, and I became convinced that I was worse off than the ordinary man who was not a Party member. Mine was the stigma of having been expelled from the Party. Then the return of my Party card became as vital a need for me as crutches for a man with one leg. And that was all, for I had already stopped thinking about helping build socialism.

Working for the People's Commissariat of Public Education, I fortunately survived the "white listing" of 1937-38. I religiously paid my Party dues and religiously attended Party meetings. I never made any speeches, hence it was impossible to detect any "tendencies" in me. I was mobilized in December 1939 and sent to the Finnish front as a platoon commander. When this war was terminated I was arrested for having publicly declared that the USSR had unjustly attacked Finland. Once again I was expelled from the Party, this time "forever." I was under investigation for fifteen months. I was accused of being a spy for Japanese intelligence. In the fall of 1941 I was released from prison because of "inconclusive evidence" and was again sent to the front. I was then taken prisoner, and have not returned to the USSR.

W. I. HRYSHKO

## An Interloper in the Komsomol

I was born in 1914 in the Ukraine. My parents were of well-to-do peasant stock from Poltava Province and belonged to the Ukrainian provincial intelligentsia. Up until the Revolution, my father was an officer in the Imperial Army. The Revolution, however, wrecked his whole career and made him a sincere counterrevolutionary. For a time, during the Civil War, he fought the Bolsheviks as a member of Petlura's National Ukrainian Army. Then, profiting from the general confusion, he slipped back home at the close of military operations and found employment in a small town in the district. It was there that I spent my childhood.

Our family did not fare too badly during the period of the NEP (New Economic Policy). Father worked in the office of the local sugar factory. In addition to this we had a plot of land that supplied us with our own fruit, vegetables, chickens, and so on.

My parents brought me up in a strictly patriarchal tradition. They were convinced that the Soviet regime was a passing phenomenon and so they shielded their children from all the new influences of the times. Great emphasis was laid on religious education and on this foundation they instilled in us respect for the authority of our elders and for the sanctity of private property. They also nurtured in us a sentimental feeling of local Ukrainian patriotism which gave me, even as a child, a strong anti-Soviet complex, since it ran flatly counter to the cosmopolitan, anti-nationalist trend of Communism prevailing at that time.

One of the features of my childhood was my parents' constant care to preserve me from the influence of "the street." I was not allowed to make friends with any children who, in my parents' eyes, were "low." Instead they would select "suitable companions" for me. This condemned me to the exclusive acquaintance of a narrow circle of middle-class children who interested me far less than the common run of children in "the street." I longed to break out of the parental restrictions and find a fuller, more adventurous circle of friends.

I was an energetic child by nature, straining to find a wider field of activity. As a result, I began to display an instinct for rebellion even in my earliest youth. As time went on, this instinct began to turn into a peculiar kind of psychological conflict with the whole spirit of my family upbringing.

I went to school in 1921 when the local raion seven-year school was already impregnated with the Soviet spirit, an influence which proved to be entirely opposed to the tenets of my family upbringing. It is true that the Soviet spirit of the school affected me little in the first three years, but from my fourth year, 1924, onwards, I became, in my childish way, acutely aware of the Soviet outlook. The contrast between the influence of my home and that of the school

began to disturb and challenge my thoughts and feelings. Everything that at home was considered sacred and necessary—religion, tradition, the patriarchal way of life, respect for private property, and local patriotism—all this was refuted and mocked at school, while the main ingredients of school education—militant atheism, the criticism and condemnation of accepted traditions and outdated family morality, Communist internationalism, and opposition to private ownership—all were rejected wholesale at home. As one might expect, this conflict gave me a certain degree of split outlook and, at the same time, developed in me the habit of approaching every problem in a peculiarly critical and detached way. This, of course, made me mature early and robbed my childhood world of those pleasures that come from a direct, uncritical acceptance of everything around. Every impression reached me so disjointedly and discordantly that my mind, amid contradictions and doubts, developed without finding a single unified ideal.

From 1924 onwards, the Children's Communist Organization of Young Pioneers began to play a part in school life. At first the numbers involved were small. Only the children of poor local workers, and Party officials who had come to the area, belonged to the organization. Gradually, however, it turned into a mass organization and became the hub of the children's activities and entertainments. By 1926-28, the Komsomol organization, too, made its appearance in the senior grades. Since they provided the only field in which the inherent drive and energy of the rising generation could find an outlet, both organizations proved an attraction to the schoolchildren. The majority of the peasants, who were hostile to everything Soviet, forbade their children to join. Young people, however, naturally hanker after all kinds of youthful activity. As these were the monopoly of the Pioneers and the Komsomol, the young were driven to rebel against the ban, and many of my school fellows joined the organizations, to the strong disapproval of their parents. Added to this, both organizations had two ways of actively promoting conflict between parents and children: by playing upon the age-old rift between the two, and by promoting among the young a form of crusade against their elders through contrasting the "new and progressive" world of Soviet youth with the "antiquated and outworn" world of the older generation. This was a leading theme of Soviet literature at this period, and it left its mark.

My parents categorically refused me permission to join the Pioneers or to have anything whatsoever to do with the Komsomol. And, presumably for this very reason, both organizations began to attract me. My longing for self-expression was so strong, and the parental ban seemed so unjust, that it often came to family quarrels in which I would follow the pattern of the young heroes of Soviet literature and rebel against the wishes of my parents. It seemed to me then that my parents really were behind the times, and their authority began to diminish as far as I was concerned. This was particularly the case while the NEP period lasted, because life in the Ukraine under the Soviets seemed very fair at the time, and my parents' obstinate hostility appeared to be motivated only by their reactionary outlook. Nevertheless, family discipline carried the day, and I was obliged to stay outside the Pioneers and the Komsomol.

The desire for self-expression, which drew me to the Pioneers and the Komsomol during my school years, at least found an outlet in a different form of youthful activity. In this, my teacher of Ukrainian literature, who had noticed my literary bent and encouraged me in it, played a decisive part. He organized a literary circle at the school in 1927, and I took over the running of it and became its moving spirit. We published our own literary magazine, organized competitions, readings, and discussions of literary works and so forth. This, however, was not just an ordinary school literary circle, but something better—a fellowship of youthful talent under the guardianship of a gifted teacher engaged in creative work outside school hours. In 1929, when I had already graduated from the seven-year school, the circle became a permanent extramural organization for our self-education.

The fall of 1929 saw the beginning of the peasant collectivization campaign and the liquidation of the kulaks, the well-to-do layer of the peasantry. My father, as a former Petlura supporter, was among the first “class enemies” to be arrested by the OGPU. The fathers of several fellow-members of my literary circle also became victims of collectivization and the kulak hunt. For us, the way to all further education was closed. The Soviet regime showed us relentless cruelty, and we now came to understand the hatred that our fathers had for it. The Komsomol, and even the Pioneers, were drawn in to help in the “Soviet offensive.” The children of kulaks and class enemies were mercilessly expelled from both organizations. The local Komsomol cell shrank and acquired a new character; in it there remained only young people deeply devoted to the Soviet regime and the semi-criminal elements of the local youth.

It was at this time, in the fall of 1929, that the most fateful event of my life occurred. A group of former pupils of our school, myself included (I was then fifteen years old), drew up and circulated an anti-Soviet leaflet based on anti-collectivist and nationalist views. The OGPU very soon discovered its authors. It was then disclosed that we all had literary leanings, and that we belonged to a literary circle formed while we were still at school. All the members of the circle were arrested together with the responsible teacher and even the director of the school. The OGPU decided that our school education had been “nationalistic” and that our literary circle was a “counterrevolutionary organization.” Just at this time an underground Petlura organization, the Union for the Liberation of the Ukraine and its subsidiary Union of Ukrainian Youth, were discovered. Our literary circle was grouped together with these.

After we had spent six months in the district prison, the OGPU sentenced us in 1930 to various terms of imprisonment, without trial, simply by the decision of an “Extraordinary Tribunal of Three.” Those of us who were under eighteen years of age at the time of the verdict, however, received conditional sentences. And since I was only just sixteen, I was released from detention after receiving a suspended sentence of three years’ imprisonment.

Now I could no longer live in my home town. My father was still in jail, our farm had been confiscated, and I, branded as a class enemy and a counter-



revolutionary, and with a sentence hanging over me as well, might well again be arrested at any time.

This was the period during which young people in the provinces were fleeing from the Ukrainian villages and country towns hit by collectivization and repression to seek a new way of life in the large industrial centers and newly built plants. I did the same, on the advice of my elders. In August 1930, I left home without identification papers or money to try my luck in Kharkov.

In Kharkov, I found work immediately on the construction site of a tractor plant. The demand for workmen was high and everyone was taken on without too close an inspection, no documents being required except for some reference from the place of previous residence. I was engaged as an apprentice machinist in the waterpipe-laying machinist team. Most of the workmen on the site were young men of Komsomol age. The proportion of Komsomol members among them was unusually high. As the *Large Soviet Encyclopedia* says: "The Kharkov Tractor Plant was built by the manual labor of Komsomol members. There were over 5,500 Komsomol members among the shock workers on the site." This statement is true; many of these Komsomol members were specially directed to the building site, but an even greater number joined the Komsomol while they were working there.

Each construction sector had a large Komsomol cell, and each working team had its Komsomol group. It was the Komsomol members who organized so-called socialist competition between workers' teams and sections of teams. At the same time, Komsomol representatives and Komsomol group organizers in the team carried on a continuous propaganda campaign among the young workers to induce them to join the Komsomol. This was done by what is known as individual treatment; in other words, a process whereby certain Komsomol members would attach themselves to two or three workmen who were not Komsomol members, and would carry out the organization's instructions to subject them to "clarification procedure" and draw them into the Komsomol.

The team I joined consisted of eighteen men. Of these, seven were Komsomol members, eight other young men, below twenty-five years of age, were not Komsomol members, and the remaining three were older men without Party affiliation. All the young men, including myself, who were not members of the Komsomol, were country lads who had fled from their villages as a result of collectivization. However, three of them were children of denounced kulaks and other class enemies, as I discovered later. But all of us, of course, concealed our past and did all we could to be the best disciplined and most effective workers in the team. As it turned out, I and the other non-members proved to be among the best shock workers. Our team, along with the majority of the workers' teams on the site, and at the prompting of the Komsomol group leader, declared itself a "shock team" and undertook to complete ahead of schedule the water-pipe-laying plan that we had been given. As a result, the Komsomol group leader himself began to urge us, as outstanding workers, to become Komsomol members. He told us that the Komsomol was an organization comprising the cream of the workers and that it was a great honor to be a Komsomol member and a leader

among one's fellows, an honor that we deserved as shock workers. The reason for this intensive treatment emerged later. We found out that our sector's Komsomol cell had been instructed by the Komsomol site committee to make our team into a "Komsomol Shock Team."

This proposal to join the Komsomol put me in a thoroughly disagreeable and dangerous position. To refuse this "honor" meant attracting attention as a "doubtful element." To accept it seemed simply out of the question to me because detailed information about a candidate's social origin and antecedents was required at entry, and this I feared above all else. Clearly, I would have to lie, and such a lie, if uncovered—as it well might be—would mean punishment for me. Of course, I would not have minded joining; I would even have been glad to do so on purely practical grounds. Membership in the Komsomol carried many advantages in entering higher educational establishments, and my greatest dream was to continue my interrupted education. I was afraid, though, to join under false pretences, or in other words to give a false account of myself. Therefore, without refusing this tempting proposal, I advanced my "lack of preparation" as an argument against entering the Komsomol, and acted the part of an uncultured and backward country lad. This acting did not come easy to me and caused me some mental anguish.

In the fall of 1930, a factory and workshop school (FZU) known as Stroyukh (Build the Ukraine!) was opened at the tractor plant construction site. It was designed to provide a two-year course for training young skilled workers. All young workers up to the age of eighteen who had graduated from the seven-year school, were invited to join this course. I, too, was enrolled together with several hundred other young men. These men were, for the most part, of peasant origin. Many of them, like me, had a "black social origin and past" and, having completed their seven-year education, wished to study further, but were unable to enter any school other than the FZU. Here, no special identification documents were required apart from a reference from the site or factory to which the FZU belonged.

On the other hand, the entrants to Stroyukh FZU included a fair proportion of Komsomol members, specially recruited by the Komsomol in various places and sent for training to the FZU. The Communist Party had some time earlier entrusted to the Komsomol the task of assuming leadership throughout the FZU schools, in other words, of taking responsibility for the preparation of "leading Bolshevik personnel for Soviet industry."

The FZU's Komsomol organization was the hub of school life, and Komsomol education an integral part of the whole educational process. As a result, the pupils were one and all automatically drawn into the Komsomol educational program at the FZU, regardless of whether or not they belonged to the Komsomol.

At first, only half the pupils in the FZU were Komsomol members. Very soon, however, the organization set itself the task of carrying through complete "Komsomolization" of the Stroyukh. This aim was formally promulgated in connection with the Ninth Congress of the All-Union Lenin Young Communist

League in January 1931, and embodied in two slogans "Full mastery of technology in one and a half, rather than two school years, by shock rates of study!" and "Komsomol in the FZU!"

Sure enough, the pace of education in the FZU was stepped up by means of a "permanent competition" run by the Komsomol organization. As for the extension of Komsomol membership to the whole school, it was carried out by an unusual means.

Nearly all the Komsomol meetings at the FZU were public, and although theoretically all pupils were free to attend or not, in fact they were obliged to. Educational tasks were assigned at these meetings, and their completion checked, not only insofar as Komsomol members were concerned, but for the whole school. A knowledge of all the Komsomol propaganda material was required from every pupil, and this material was studied at the same public meetings. The meetings usually closed with an appeal to join the Komsomol. Special groups were set up in the school for the preparation of entry into the Komsomol. In these, Komsomol members attached to each group directed the studies and instructed the pupils in the program, constitution, and history of the Komsomol. After a few weeks in one of these groups those who were regarded as sufficiently "prepared" were given questionnaires and application forms for entry into the Komsomol. Next, all those who had made an application and filled in a questionnaire were called to attend an ordinary Komsomol meeting, each application and questionnaire was read aloud, and the application was thrown open for discussion. Every Komsomol member present could object to an application if he considered that for any reason the candidate concerned was unsuitable for membership.

The main grounds for objection usually were lack of discipline at study or work (the pupils spent half their time working at the site), disorderly behavior and, in particular, indifference in competitions, and poor educational progress. Unsuitable social origin was also considered an extremely important ground for objection.

Yet nobody checked on the facts of social origin, and nobody except the candidate himself knew them, or could know them, since the majority of the pupils came from many different and, frequently, distant places. Applications, which usually stated only the required minimum, "son (or daughter) of kolkhoznik (or worker)," were accepted at their face value. Every now and again it might happen that unspecified information would be received from somewhere, as a result of which certain pupils, as children of "class enemy elements," would be excluded, not only from the Komsomol but from the school. Several such cases were, for propaganda reasons, subsequently studied at Komsomol and open meetings. Generally speaking, though, I noticed that such cases only cropped up when the Komsomol organization had had occasion to take special notice of a pupil because of his poor behavior, or because he had been denounced. I gathered the impression that the Komsomol leadership deliberately overlooked the past of Komsomol candidates and accepted them at their current value, being more concerned with 100% Komsomol membership than with the social purity of their rank-and-file members.

In January 1931, after a few sessions in a group for the preparation of Komsomol candidates, I, along with a number of other pupils, received a questionnaire and a proposal to submit an application. I had the example of other fellow pupils before me and quite mechanically filled in the questionnaire, putting down "kolkhoznik's son" under the heading "Social Origin" and writing the standard declaration with a request for admission to the Komsomol.

Two weeks later, at the next Komsomol meeting, I was accepted as a Komsomol member. The acceptance procedure was very simple and short. When my questionnaire had been read aloud, I was asked to stand by the committee table. The secretary of the Komsomol cell introduced me to the meeting and asked whether anyone had any questions to put to me. There were none. He then asked whether there were any objections. Again none were raised; all that could be heard were joking remarks such as: "A good lad," "A fine guy," etc. Next an open vote was taken, and all hands were raised in the affirmative. Whereupon I and some nine others who were accepted at the same time were informed that "the case was being put to the tractor plant construction site's Komsomol committee for confirmation." The very same month, at the next regular meeting, we were all told that our entry into the Komsomol had been confirmed, and were handed our Komsomol certificates then and there. Three months later I received my permanent card. I had become a Komsomol member. I was seventeen years old.

I was very nervous just before and during the acceptance procedure. I was anxious about the possible trouble I might incur as a result of this seemingly dangerous gamble. I was afraid of being exposed and of the inevitable consequence, expulsion from the school. Having gotten into the FZU under false pretences, I really felt like an interloper. This constant anxiety and lack of self-confidence turned into a pronounced complex that I was inferior to the other young workers whom I regarded as "real Soviet people." When, therefore, I found myself accepted easily and quickly without any complications into the ranks of the "real Soviet Youth," my fear turned into overwhelming relief, exaltation, and faith in myself.

By entering the Komsomol I had acquired my full rights as a Soviet citizen. From then on I felt an integral member of the school community and realized with pleasure that I was now "like the rest." Moreover, entry into the Komsomol had solved the difficult problem of my future and opened the way to further education for me; this even gave me a sense of gratitude and obligation.

The primary Komsomol organization that had taken me on as a member had the title of "Komsomol Cell of the Machinists' Shop, FZU School of Stroyukh." It consisted of roughly sixty pupils in the machinists' department. The other departments—turners, carpenters, and joiners—each had their own cell, and together formed the "Komsomol Collective, FZU School of Stroyukh," which was devoted partly to training and partly to production work.

The regular headquarters of our cell was in the FZU combine training building. But, as all the pupils were away in their teams working on the site

for half of the week, the cell undertook in its sector of the site the organization of competitions aimed at fulfilling the working plan. All of us received the same pay, 120 rubles a month. The cell secretary was an ordinary pupil like the rest of us, a man who worked and studied with us and did not differ in any way from the others. In any case, membership in the cell leadership or "buro" entailed only responsibilities, and certainly no privileges. The responsibilities were essentially those of a sheepdog: to drive others on, both at work and study, and to answer for the success and failures of all. This meant that nobody was eager to shoulder these duties, but that, when somebody was selected by election at a Komsomol meeting, he would carry them out to the best of his ability and as a matter of course.

The composition of the cell leadership varied a great deal. During my time at the school, the members of the buro changed several times. There was no envy, no enmity whatsoever between them and the ordinary Komsomol members. There were just the occasional clashes provoked by the difficulty of carrying out the production tasks supervised by members of the buro. Apart from these, a strong sense of fellowship bound the members of the cell, since all were equally concerned with the work in hand.

Broadly speaking, the Komsomol members in our cell belonged to one of two categories: one group consisting of those who aimed no higher than to qualify as fitters and to find suitable work in the factory we were building, and the other comprising those who looked on their stay at the FZU merely as a means of going on to further education. The pupils of the second group had a higher standard of intelligence and, as I later found out through being one of them, included many youths of non-proletarian origin who were concealing their past. For all of us, the FZU, the fact of being workmen, and our membership in the Komsomol, were merely steps to a later career. As a result, we tended to be more highly disciplined and more efficient, to learn and work more thoroughly than the rest and at the same time to be better and more active Komsomol members.

Insofar as the hallmark of Komsomol activity was the fulfillment of all tasks, known as "loads," set by the Komsomol, the pupils of the second kind dealt more conscientiously with these tasks and thus turned out, in fact, to be model Komsomol members. One of these, among others, was the secretary of the entire Komsomol collective in the school, Mikhail Gursky. Gursky was two years older than I, a native of Vinnitsa Oblast. He entered the Komsomol in 1930 as one of the most active shock workers on the tractor plant construction site. In the early days of Stroyukh, when the community of trainees was still a formless mass, and few pupils knew each other, Gursky began to knock the school's Komsomol organization into shape on his own initiative, displaying exceptional energy and great organizing talents. This determined his position in the school community.

Later, after he had been elected secretary of the Komsomol organization, Gursky gave all his spare time to Komsomol work and jealously watched to

ensure that all the tasks set by the site Komsomol committee were fulfilled and over-fulfilled. He not only goaded all of us on but also spared neither his own health or strength. To all of us, Komsomol members and non-members alike, Gursky gave the impression of a fanatical young Communist bred in a proletarian environment. But we were wrong. On the recommendation of the site Komsomol committee, and because of his Komsomol activity at the school, Gursky was sent to a construction engineering institute when he had completed the Stroyukh course. And there, as early as 1934, he was denounced and exposed as "the son of a disestablished priest, who had concealed his social origin and slipped into the Komsomol by fraud in order to become a Soviet engineer."

I also carried out all my Komsomol tasks conscientiously. Luckily, the Komsomol work in the school included only educational duties and therefore nothing that could have been uncongenial from a political point of view. My first and permanent Komsomol task in this cell was to edit the general school wall newspaper. This, because of my literary bent, was not an uncongenial task, and I carried it out very willingly.

My membership in the Komsomol caused me no external or internal conflicts of an ideological or psychological nature while I remained at the FZU school in 1931 and the first half of 1932. There was not the usual opposition between Komsomol members and non-members since we were all members. Komsomol, or in other words, Communist, education had exactly the same aims as the school education itself. The underlying principles gave me no cause for doubt; they were self-evident in so far as I was concerned, being part of the only education available. In spite of material difficulties, such as the constant food shortage which was particularly acute at the time, neither I nor the young people around me had any anti-Soviet feelings. We simply found in the heroic tension involved in the building of a new world an excuse for all the difficulties.

And, true enough, all the activity around us ran its course amid continual tension under the slogan, on the site, of completing the construction of the factory ahead of plan, and, at the school, under that of finishing the course before the appointed date and with the highest marks. The atmosphere of undaunted struggle in a common cause—the completion of the factory—engaged our imagination, roused our enthusiasm, and drew us into a sort of front-line world where difficulties were overlooked or forgotten. Of course, it was only we, the younger generation, who accepted reality in this way. Our parents were full of muted but deep discontent. The arguments of our elders, however, had little effect upon us, being, as they were, wholly concerned with material things, while we found in the official justification of all these difficulties a superficial idealism which had considerable appeal to the young.

The only moments of hesitation that I experienced every now and again came with the knowledge that I was an interloper and the fear that this would be discovered. Gradually even this feeling dwindled; the past was fading in my mind, and I would occasionally come to believe that somehow I had straightened things out and had become a new and different man. A continual outward

show as a full-blooded Communist became not only a reflex, but an integral part of my mind. The veneer was turning into substance, the pose into a personal reality. I even began to feel that I was the man I had pretended to be.

My first successes in my chosen field of literature date from this period. In 1931 I wrote a story which was published in *Molodyak* (The Youth), a literary and art periodical published by the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Komsomol. The State Publishing House accepted a large number of my stories for publication in the fall of the same year. In addition to the FZU courses, I was now attending night classes at the institute of journalism on the tractor plant construction site, and was active in a workers' literary circle sponsored by the All-Ukrainian Writers' Union. Everything was going as well as it possibly could, and I had no cause to quarrel with the Komsomol, which represented, for me, the road to the accomplishment of my dearest wishes.

The graduation of our first batch of FZU trainees took place ahead of schedule, in May 1932, when the tractor construction site had already become the newly completed Kharkov Tractor Plant, known as the KhTZ. I obtained work as a machinist in the precision shop attached to the plant laboratory. A new stage of my Komsomol life was beginning, no longer in the education collective, but in the ordinary labor organization of the plant Komsomol.

The second cell, the workshop cell, in which I now found myself, was very different from my old cell in the FZU. Here the Komsomol members, about twelve of them as I remember, were surrounded by a mass of older workers who had no Party affiliation. In the absence of a Party organization—there were only two Party members and one candidate in the workshop all told—it was the Komsomol cell which had to play the part of the “active nucleus” among the workers.

The cell, under a stream of direct instructions from the Party representative, had the task of conducting all the political campaigns and carrying out all the political measures laid down by the Party. In other words it had to organize shock work and competitions, to foster enthusiasm for the fulfillment of a whole variety of special plans,” etc. Thus, the Komsomol members in the workshop stood for the embodiment of the general Party Line amid the ordinary mass of working folk. This gave the workers a not entirely friendly outlook towards the Komsomol.

It was in this cell that I first felt the burden of my Komsomol membership. I had become accustomed in the FZU not to distinguish between members and non-members, and was unable to adjust my ways to my new circumstances. Even when doing my best to carry out Komsomol assignments, I carried them out badly.

Try as I might, the part of propagandist and competition organizer, my allotted Komsomol task, would come to nothing in my hands, because I treated all workers equally as comrades and tried much harder to establish good relations than to wring from them the fulfillment of targets. Apart from this, my whole attention was fixed on literary thoughts and self-education, and this left

insufficient time for Komsomol activities. Competitions and plan fulfillment went badly in the team where I worked. We were lagging behind. The Komsomol organizer and the Party representative were displeased with me. I would be called before the cell bureau, asked to give an explanation at the Komsomol meetings, accused of "neglecting the interests of production," of "tagging along behind," and so on.

I would then receive new production assignments which I managed no better and therefore drew upon myself still further queries from the Komsomol. Finally, I was told to organize the workshop's Red Corner. This turned out to be a success, and, after it had received a favorable notice in the factory newspaper, my Red Corner work became my main Komsomol activity in the workshop.

The life and work of the shop cell were extremely monotonous and uninteresting. The whole activity consisted of endless fuss about the fulfillment and over-fulfillment of production tasks. The entire form and content of Komsomol meetings were repetitive routine.

In addition to various current questions of production or politics, chiefly consisting of a study of the application of the latest government and Party decrees to actual conditions in the plant, the meetings heard individual reports by Komsomol members about the execution of their assignments. All members had to be present. Absence from meetings without good cause was treated as a gross breach of Komsomol discipline. As a rule, therefore, all Komsomol members would stay on for the meetings which took place in the Red Corner after work. Everyone showed a complete lack of interest, however, impatiently waiting for the meetings to end and taking every convenient opportunity to dodge them. There was no trace of voluntary activity at the meetings. The main speeches were usually fixed beforehand; the secretary instructed particular individuals to speak on given questions and laid down in broad outline what they were to say. He, in his turn, was instructed by the Party representative or the special instructors of the plant Komsomol committee as to what should be discussed at the meetings, and in what way.

Criticism and self-criticism were obligatory, but entirely artificial. All that happened, in fact, was that the speakers repeated, with variations, the points made in the opening speech or in the report of the cell secretary or in that of the representative of the plant Komsomol committee who would put in an appearance if particularly important questions were due to be discussed. All the decisions and resolutions of the meeting were also prepared in advance, though some of those present at the meeting would be told to read them aloud and move their adoption.

No special debates were ever held at the cell meetings. There was not even serious discussion of the candidates for election or re-election to office. The attitude towards the election of officials was one of universal indifference, since candidates were designated from above, rather than freely chosen by those present at the meetings. They were picked by the cell bureau and were in accordance with the wishes of the Party representative who was almost invariably present at the meetings. It was left to one of the rank-and-file members to put up the



names of the candidates, although everyone knew that he spoke without personal conviction. Of course, an objection could be lodged, but this right was hardly ever exercised, since it was abundantly clear that only a candidate approved from above could be elected.

The members of our cell buro went through several elections, those who had not carried out their duties satisfactorily being replaced by others. The cell secretary, Fedor Potashnikov, however, remained in office throughout my time. Potashnikov was a young mechanic of proletarian origin, an intelligent and well-educated man who had been prevented by ill health from finishing a course of studies at the Machine Building Institute. He was a loyal fellow-worker and an efficient Komsomol member. Incidentally, it is a typical fact that the majority of the officials were to some extent two-faced. They were sternly formal at Komsomol meetings and when carrying out their Komsomol duties, in accordance with the code of "Komsomol Behavior." Off duty, on the other hand, away from Komsomol activities, they were no different from the rest of us and often expressed, in private, views that were entirely contradictory to those they upheld in their official capacity.

Fedor Potashnikov was no exception. A hereditary proletarian, he regarded the Soviet regime as though it were his own, his "Workers Regime," and was devoted heart and soul to it. But that did not prevent him from criticizing its shortcomings quite sharply. My relations with him were close, and I noticed that away from Komsomol activities he never even referred to the organization, took no interest in it, and seemed to forget its existence. It looked as though he, together with many other Komsomol officials, merely acted his part well for official purposes and reverted to his real self the rest of the time.

During my time in the cell I remember only one man who was, or rather tried to be, consistently a model Komsomol member even in his private life. He was a permanent agitator-propagandist in the cell and carried out his duties eagerly, thereby making a nuisance of himself at every turn. He was disliked; he had no true friends, and everyone was slightly scared of his "Bolshevik vigilance."

Even he, however, was denounced in 1935. It turned out that he was the son of a "class-alien element." He was expelled from the Komsomol and removed from the factory, although he soon made his way back. It was rumored that he had an NKVD connection.

In general, exclusion from the Komsomol meant exclusion from work. There were only two such expulsions during my time in the cell. The second of these concerned the son of a former Red Partisan who was well known in Kharkov and was excluded from the Party for some sort of deviation. This entailed the expulsion of his son as well. Needless to say, the formal grounds for expulsion were not the shortcomings of the boy's father, but his own "unsocialist attitude to labor" which had showed itself in his "disregard for the production tasks set by the Komsomol."

The cell took on few members and hardly grew at all. During the year in which I belonged to it I can recall that there were only three recruits to the

Komsomol, because of the small number of workers in the shop below the age of twenty-six, the upper limit for Komsomol membership.

*The Junction*, my collection of stories about Soviet youth in the Ukraine during the period of "socialist construction," was published in the spring of 1933. It was quite well received by the official Soviet reviewers, as, for instance, by the reviewer in the magazine *For Marxist-Leninist Criticism*, No. 10, 1933. This was the summit of my achievement under the Soviet regime.

Yet at this very moment, when, as it seemed, I should have found happiness and fulfillment, I encountered the greatest crisis of my life, a crisis of conscience that led first to a psychological withdrawal on my part from the Komsomol and from Soviet reality as a whole, and later to a breach with everything that they involved.

It was during the same spring of 1933 that the Ukraine was struck by the notorious famine brought about by the Soviet policy. Although there was no actual famine in Kharkov itself, the total lack of food in the villages not only led to shortages in the city but, what was more important, drove floods of starving peasants to die, day after day, in the streets of Kharkov. A heavy mood of depression spread among the workers, along with the rest of the Ukrainian population. The Komsomol members were not immune to this, especially since they began to be sent to the villages, working as teams in rotation for two or three days at a time, as part of an attempt to make good the collapse of the kolkhozes which had hardly anybody left to work in the fields. Our depression was intensified by the terrible scenes of ruin and devastation which met us in the countryside. It was then that, more clearly than ever before, we saw through the sham official propaganda which still claimed that there was no hunger in the country, only "growing pains." Every one of the explanations that we heard at Komsomol meetings from senior Komsomol officials and Party agitators proved to be obvious lies.

The sight of dying Ukrainian villages in 1933 shook me to the depth of my being. They awoke all the counterrevolutionary ideas and beliefs that I had received from my parents, that had led me to write anti-Soviet pamphlets and had put me in jail in 1929. All these ideas which had remained alive within me until I entered the Komsomol and which I had all but lost during the last relatively happy years as a worker in Kharkov now began to develop quickly and strongly.

It was then that I first became ashamed of being a member of the Komsomol, of belonging to an organization given over to false Communist teaching, a tool of the Communist Party which was the enemy of my people. My counter-revolutionary change of outlook gained impetus. The regime of terror which broke over the Ukraine in the spring of 1933, nominally as part of the "struggle against Ukrainian nationalism," did much to intensify my feelings. It was chiefly directed against nationalist-minded Ukrainian intellectuals and took the form of mass arrests of Ukrainian writers, scientists, and public figures, including some prominent Communists. To mark his protest against the terror and against Bolshevik policy in the Ukraine in general, the most popular Ukrainian Com-

unist author of the period, Mykola Khvylovy, shot himself. He had been the spiritual leader of the national opposition among Ukrainian Communists, a deviation now known as Khvylovism. Then Nikolai Skrypnyk, People's Commissar of Education, one of the oldest Ukrainian Communists, was accused of "Ukrainian nationalism," and he too committed suicide.

These suicides made a deep impression on the Komsomol youth of Kharkov who saw in them the downfall of intellectual Communism in the Ukraine and proof of the national tragedy of the Ukraine. I, myself, was one of those whom these suicides brought to a halt and sobered down. They destroyed all our illusions about Soviet reality. It was after this that I, and many other intelligent Ukrainian Komsomol members, began to turn towards Ukrainian nationalism which the Communist Party and the Komsomol had declared to be their chief enemy in the Ukraine.

The Central Committee of the Ukrainian Komsomol was well aware of this mood among the Komsomol members of Kharkov. It called a special Komsomol Youth Rally at the end of May 1933, a week after Khvylovy's suicide, under the slogan "For the Struggle Against Ukrainian Nationalism!" A selected group of Komsomol members were sent from the tractor plant to take part in the rally, and I was one of them.

The rally took place in the Central Workers' Club at Kharkov. The main event was the speech of the President of the Union of Soviet Writers of the Ukraine, I. Kulyk. Another important speaker, specially dispatched from Moscow, was the well-known Komsomol poet, A. Bezymensky.

These speeches, full of bombastic Communist optimism and shrill condemnation of Ukrainian nationalism, had a devastating effect on the majority of the audience. The platform was flooded with written questions the contents of which—some of them were quoted in Kulyk's and Bezymensky's concluding remarks—came as an unforeseen shock to the organizers of the rally. The questions demanded a straight and honest explanation of the reasons for Khvylovy's suicide, requested that his last letter be read (various legends about this letter were already circulating among the youth of Kharkov), and even expressed sympathy with "Khvylovism." Finally the spirit of opposition among the majority of those present threw the concluding part of the rally, devoted to literature and art, into wholesale confusion. As soon as Bezymensky started to read his new poem *A Tragic Night*, over two thirds of those attending the rally walked out of the hall. The reading was brought prematurely to an end.

I and my fellow Komsomol members from the factory left the hall in a mood of black depression. We exchanged views openly and sincerely, expressing our sympathy with Khvylovy and Khvylovism. We decided to work for his grave. We made our way to the cemetery where the author was buried, found his unmarked grave, and on the newly erected wooden fence we carved, as an epitaph, a quotation from his writings.

A few days later I was imprudent enough to mention my sympathy with Khvylovy and his nationalist leanings to my fellow workers in the shop. This

conversation came to the ears of the Party representative attached to our Komsomol cell. He summoned Potashnikov and ordered him to call an immediate meeting of the buro in order to go over the case with me. Potashnikov warned me of the danger which threatened me and told me how to behave. I was brought before the buro and accused of "disseminating unhealthy nationalist ideas among the workers." In accordance with the secretary's friendly advice, I confessed and condemned my fault. But, as my case was in the nature of an "ideological deviation," it was passed to the plant Komsomol committee and thence on to the Party committee. Exclusion from the Komsomol, with all its consequences, now hung over me.

Events, however, suddenly took on a different complexion. The fact, that I, a nineteen year old workman, was a rising young Soviet writer who had recently published a book, saved me. I was summoned by the secretary of the plant Party committee. He told me sternly, but in a not unfriendly way, that he ought to hand me over to the Special (i.e. NKVD) Department of the Factory, and that this might well end disastrously for me. He said that he had decided not to do so, because, taking into account my youth and my talent, he felt sure that everything that had happened was the result of my "poetical and emotionally unbalanced temperament." He read me a long lecture about the danger of Ukrainian nationalism, and particularly about the danger, for my own sake, of thoughtless statements. This he rounded off with the solid advice to get out of the factory as quickly as possible, and go somewhere else, to study, for instance. As he put it, "a factory is not the place for a man of your type."

It should be pointed out that this secretary of the Party organization of the Kharkov Tractor Plant whose attitude to me had been so humane was denounced during the Yezhov purge as an accomplice of the "bloc of Trotskyites and Ukrainian nationalists," arrested, and finally "liquidated."

I took his advice. As soon as the current recruitment of candidates for higher educational establishments had begun, I applied to Kharkov State University, passed an examination, and was accepted into the Department of Literature. Thus began the third and last stage of my Komsomol existence, in a Komsomol student organization.

The third Komsomol organization to which I belonged was the primary cell of the day course in the Department of Literature for entrants in the year 1935. This course, one of five in the department, had thirty-six students, including nearly thirty Komsomol members. The rest were over the Komsomol age, two of them, in fact, being Party members. In general, the majority of university students in those days were Komsomol members, particularly in the humanistic and social-economic departments—philosophy, linguistics, literature, history, and economics. This was simply due to the fact that Komsomol candidates to the university were given priority over the rest and were usually accepted first from among those who had passed the entrance examination. Apart from this, a

systematic "Komsomolization" of the students was carried out in the university, as in all other higher educational establishments at that time, although not on quite such an intensive scale as in the factory and workshop school.

In the university, as in the factory, the main object of Komsomol activity was to concentrate the students' whole attention on the problem of plan fulfillment and over-fulfillment, in this case the successful completion of the program of studies. The requirement was that every Komsomol student should be 100% successful (in other words that he should have no poor marks) and should thereby justify the state's expenditure on his education; education was free then, all the students receiving grants and dormitory accommodations.

The students, like the factory workers, were divided into teams, or groups, each of which was collectively responsible for the progress and behavior of every one of its members. The indices of the teams' progress were displayed in special graphs on "red" and "black" boards, where the names of the "leaders" and the "laggards" were recorded. The best students, the "leaders," were attached to the "laggards," with instructions to help them with their work day by day and bring them up to their own level.

Groups and courses, as well as the entire departments, competed with each other for the best marks. Competition results were published in wall-newspapers and in the student bulletin. Just as in industry, if a "breakdown" occurred, if it looked as though the plan would not be fulfilled, the Komsomol organization would arrange an "assault," in other words a feverish struggle to improve the progress indices.

This, of course, did little to help the true progress of learning, although it created a permanent atmosphere of tension and forced everyone to work with redoubled energy. Study came to resemble strained and heavy industrial work. The Komsomol meetings, to which the reports on groups and individual members were submitted, were almost entirely devoted to the problem of bringing the backward students up to standard.

Another of the main tasks of the Komsomol at the university was the carrying out of systematic Marxist-Leninist ideological education. This consisted in endlessly "working over" the latest government and Party decrees, all the documents about the Party and Komsomol congresses, the conferences and plenary meetings of the Central Committee, and the current articles by the leading papers of the Soviet press.

The meetings at which all this was done were convened regularly every two weeks, and far more frequently during major political campaigns. These meetings were so exquisitely dull and monotonous, and represented such an unpleasant and burdensome chore for those who had to attend, that their evasion became a normal practice and gave the Komsomol leadership more trouble than anything else. The main drawback of these meetings, of course, was that they took up too much of the time that was badly needed for study.

The majority of the Komsomol students showed an ill-concealed dislike for Komsomol activities. Only certain of the less gifted students, who rested their

hopes on the bonus that Komsomol work might bring them, showed a modicum of enthusiasm for these activities.

The Komsomol community at the university had no unity and no distinctive personality of its own. It was split into two groups that corresponded to two psychological types among the students. These two types had even received names in our idiom: "activists" and "academicians." The activists were chiefly those who consciously chose to center their careers on Komsomol work and made all their plans depend on the Komsomol and the Party. The academicians, on the other hand, avoided Komsomol activities, buried themselves in their work, and staked their future solely on their ability. The activists were in a minority as compared with the academicians. There was even some enmity between the two groups.

One of the main features of Komsomol "activism" in the university was participation in the "ideological struggle" against a variety of deviations in the work of the teaching staff. In 1935, the main deviation to be hunted out day after day in the lectures was still Ukrainian nationalism. The most shining quality a Komsomol member could display was to show "Bolshevik vigilance" and spot in good time even the slightest sign of dangerous deviation. This was usually the foundation of an activist's career. In trying to show vigilance, the activists often took exception in cases where deviation only existed in their own ignorant minds. Perfectly innocent individuals often had to suffer as a result of this, and this was the main reason the academicians hated the activists.

Quite apart from the psychological division into activists and academicians, a separation of the students into two social groups became obvious at the very start. One group, by far the larger, was made up of young village laborers and workers of peasant origin. These young people, who already had the hard experience of working life on kolkhozes, building sites, and in factories, were badly provided for since they had only their student grants. By their very nature they were deeply opposed to the existing order, and there were few activists among them. The other group was mainly composed of the "gilded youth," the offspring of urban and Party bureaucrats. Its members were better off and wholeheartedly devoted to the Soviet system, owing to the privileged position of their parents. Hence there were fewer oppositionally-minded young people among them, but many activists.

These groups were completely isolated from each other in student life. Friendships were made through sharing living conditions and having a common outlook, and marked differences existed between the groups in this respect. All the students of one kind lived in dormitories and fitted their lives as modestly as possible into the restricted budget allowed by their grants. The other type stayed with their parents and lived on a more generous scale. Here again there was enmity between the groups. Those of worker and peasant origin ridiculed the members of the urban gilded youth and called them "Georgies," while the latter contemptuously used the generic name "kolkhoznik" for anyone in the other group, not very different from the old cry of "peasant."

Finally, a national difference marked these groups. The students of working class origin were almost exclusively Ukrainians and spoke only in their native language among themselves. The group of gilded youth, on the other hand, was drawn from a variety of nationalities, but, owing to its Russified middle class or bureaucratic background, treated Ukrainian as the language of a primitive rural province.

The constant preoccupation of all Komsomol students with questions concerning "deviations" among the teaching staff and the prevailing atmosphere of deviation mania tended to turn us into specialists, almost research workers, in the study of deviation. Through this involuntary but intensive consideration of every possible manifestation of deviation, we found ourselves first interested and then attracted by this phenomenon because of the many aspects that appealed to our emotions and our minds. The natural contrariness of the young and their liking for spiritual rebellion found expression in our case in a deep-seated conversion to deviation. Thereafter, our interest in the subject was no longer motivated by duty and ideological training, but by a psychological affinity with it.

Naturally enough, the tendency to deviation arose and spread mostly among the members of the "kolkhoznik" set. To a large extent, this was due to the fact that they were housed in dormitories and lived in compact groups which unceasingly discussed current events, all of which were connected in the fullest possible sense with the discovery of deviations.

Thus, hidden sympathies for deviation and deviationists turned, gradually and unnoticed, into a spirit of opposition which animated small groups of students who trusted each other. When such a group found out that the learned work of some professor or the writings of some author had been condemned as dangerous sources of deviation and had been removed from circulation, the books would immediately be obtained at any cost. They would be read, discussed, and, of course, assimilated. The knowledge that it was all forbidden material drew the members of a group together with a band of secrecy and gave them something of an "underground" air.

Such a group of fellow thinkers came into being in our room as well. There were five of us. We were all Komsomol members, "kolkhozniks" and secret opponents of the regime. All of us had come from a Ukrainian peasant background, and had experienced hardship and personal grief through collectivization and the destruction of our homes. In short, we were alike, and therefore we understood and could trust each other.

During the first year we grew to know each other; during the second we formed a true family of friends. Because literature was our subject, and we were, in a way, all future writers, we became particularly engrossed in the works of banned Ukrainian writers of the Khvylovy type. Works of this kind were in constant circulation among us. Our ideas and emotions quite deliberately inclined toward the Ukrainian nationalist deviation.

Now that I had acquired some insight into the study of literature, I became extremely critical of my former literary activities and of my early successes. From

the moment I entered the university I gave up writing for publication and concentrated on writing solely for myself and my friends. The deep disillusionment that 1933 had brought me gave me a strong dislike of that official optimism which every Soviet writer must adopt. Overcome by "defeatism," I could write only pessimistic pieces which could never be published.

At the same time I gradually began to disregard all Komsomol activities and became an open "academician." The Komsomol leadership started to take note of this. At Komsomol meetings I was severely rebuked more than once for passivity, and my Komsomol life was finally marked with a reprimand for failure to carry out my Komsomol assignment. In general, I had acquired a bad reputation.

A new wave of mass terror struck the Ukraine in the winter of 1934-35, after Kirov's murder. It was again directed at the Ukrainian intelligentsia, but this time against the new Soviet intelligentsia, including its Komsomol members. An event now occurred which brought me to the verge of expulsion from the Komsomol. The press announced the execution of a group of Ukrainian writers and poets which was described by the NKVD as "an underground terrorist organization of nationalists." Among those shot as members of the group were two popular Ukrainian poets, Vlizko and Falkivsky, both student members and products of the Komsomol.

This was a heavy blow for me and my friends. Both these men had been our favorite poets; we had known them personally. One of us had even been a correspondent and a personal friend of Vlizko's. This student left for his winter holidays at the end of the term after Vlizko's death and was never seen again. It later transpired that he had been arrested in an attempt to cross the Western border. Our room and small circle came under suspicion. It so happened that about this time we had a small friendly celebration. Nothing much happened apart from a little drinking, but we were "framed" with accusations of drunkenness and even "moral degeneracy." The case was given local publicity in the student newspaper, we were given a sharp dressing-down at a Komsomol meeting, and received a "warning and reprimand," the last step before expulsion. Our group was broken up and made to change rooms, and this was the end of our little circle.

After this incident we became extremely cautious and devoted ourselves to our Komsomol duties and the assignments we had been given "for corrective purposes." I received the task of editing the newspaper of the Kharkov "Svet Shakhtera" factory where a special Komsomol team had been sent from the university to "take the retrograde factory in tow." Our team was mainly engaged in political education work within the plant. I did pretty well at my task and felt that I had smoothed over my transgressions against the Komsomol. But that was merely a vain belief on my part. Actually, as I learned later, the Special (NKVD) Department of the university had me under constant supervision. A case was being prepared for my expulsion from the Komsomol, and worse.

At the beginning of the academic year 1935-36, the third course of the Department of Literature, to which we belonged, was transferred from Kharkov



to Kiev University. Officially, this move was due to the transfer of the capital of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic from Kharkov to Kiev. In fact, it was largely due to the shortage of teaching staff at Kharkov, particularly in the humanist departments where nearly half the teachers had been liquidated as a result of purges.

The crucial event which suddenly put me outside the bounds, not only of the Komsomol but of Soviet life as a whole, occurred in Kiev at the beginning of the first winter term. Enquiries by the Special Department elicited that for five years I had concealed my stay in prison in connection with the Union of Liberation of the Ukraine case and my father's status as a class enemy and former Petlura officer. A Komsomol meeting was immediately called, and this sensational material published.

It was usual on such occasions to force the offender to come forward with a self-denouncing speech, in which he would confess his crime and beg for forgiveness and mercy. I had had occasion to watch many such confessions during my years in the Komsomol. Regardless of the confession and the plea for mercy, the offender would usually be excluded from the Komsomol and fired from work. I therefore decided not to lose my dignity before my comrades and fellow students. I said that the information received was true and heard the verdict in silence. It was unanimous—it could not be anything else in such circumstances—and read: “That he be expelled from the Komsomol, and that the Rector be asked to expel him from the university.” The request to the Rector was, of course, only a formality, since exclusion from the university occurred automatically in such cases.

After hearing the verdict, I left Kiev the same evening without even collecting my belongings from the dormitory. I now began to wander about in search of work. I traveled endlessly and stayed in the most out-of-the-way parts of the Ukraine, lending a hand in any village schools that were short of teachers. I could only keep jobs for a short spell, by using my old student papers. As soon as there was any question of establishing me permanently, I was forced to move on, so as not to be discovered again by a Special Department. But the NKVD kept an eye on me. I was arrested in the summer of 1936.

When I was already lodged in the Kharkov Oblast jail, I heard that all my closest fellow Komsomol members at the university had been arrested. Moreover, a number of leading Komsomol officials at both Kharkov and Kiev Universities had also been jailed. These arrests were not connected with my case but with a renewed campaign against the “bloc of Trotskyites and Ukrainian nationalists” that the NKVD had ostensibly discovered in the Ukraine.

M. Lyubersky, a Jew by origin, secretary of the University Komsomol committee and a member of its city committee, was arrested and accused not merely of Trotskyism, but also of Ukrainian nationalism. The Rector of the University was also arrested. By the winter of 1937, when I had been transferred to an investigation prison, the arrest of Komsomol and Party members had reached such huge proportions that over half of those incarcerated in the prison were people with a Komsomol past.

Against such a background my case came to look much less splendid than I had thought at first. I was merely one of the many that had fallen victim to the colossal purge of suspect and unreliable elements from the Party and the Komsomol.

During the winter of 1937, the Special Board of the Kharkov Oblast Tribunal sentenced me to three years' imprisonment in "remote corrective labor camps" and to one year's loss of civic rights on release. I was twenty-three years of age at the time.

I returned to the Ukraine in 1940, after completing my sentence, and fled abroad during the war in 1943.

I regard my time as an interloper in the Komsomol as an incidental episode brought about by the circumstances of my life. Nevertheless, it is typical of the lives of a very great number of young people of my generation. To many thousands of children who had become the victims of the Soviet regime, the Komsomol became, as it had been for me, a necessary stage on the way to normal life in the Soviet Union. This is particularly true of those who looked for education and, with this object in mind, had to acquire the title of worker and work for a period at a factory or on a construction site.

Apart from this, the Komsomol, as the mass youth organization of the USSR, undertook wholesale recruiting campaigns (in my case, for example, the "Komsomolization" of the FZU) which made it incredibly difficult to go through normal life as a young man without becoming a member of the Komsomol. It is a well-known fact that tens of millions have by now passed through the Komsomol in the USSR. I was one of them, and this causes me neither remorse nor regret, particularly since I know from direct experience that, for the majority of the Komsomol members, their membership in the organization was not a matter of free choice, but essentially an obligatory step in their progress, however voluntary it may have appeared.

My time in the Komsomol has left no special imprint of any kind upon me. All that is typical of Komsomol education is equally typical of Soviet education as a whole. No particular type of Soviet citizen is produced exclusively by the Komsomol. Anyone who has received a Soviet upbringing, whether within the Komsomol or outside it but in any case under it, will have the same imprint common to all.

## Life in the Countryside

It is hard to say what course my life would have taken if my outlook had not been partly shaped by the social and political organizations of the Soviet Union.

I was born in 1913 near Penza in the family of a Russian village priest. My boyhood was closely linked with the Church. Until my thirteenth year, I sang in the choir, served at the altar and read sacred literature. This was due not so much to my father's influence as to that of other relatives who were then teachers in public schools and government employees in neighboring villages. They were educated and at the same time deeply religious, and they encouraged me to aspire to a high standard in Church music. We spent much time together discussing religious topics. I think they may have wanted me to follow my father into the priesthood.

In 1928, all these relatives were transferred to other places of work. They rarely visited us. And in order to go on to secondary school I, too, had to leave my native village and move to Penza, about thirty kilometers away. From then on, my life took an entirely new turn. I went home two or three times a month, and then only for a couple of hours at a time. I started drifting away from my family, and went to church very rarely. This was because my parish priest had been arrested and I had no liking for the other priests who followed the line of the new Church. These were against my father.

Most of the teachers of my secondary school were prerevolutionary intellectuals. They were closely watched by the Party. The school was run not by the headmaster, the son of a former tradesman, but by his assistant, a member of the rural district Party committee.

The pupils at the school were a varied crowd. The vast majority were working-class children from the city and surrounding villages. There were also children from the first kolkhoz communes, and these enjoyed the special protection of the school authorities. They were the "proletarian" layer and, therefore, the leading group in the school community. Boys and girls with a "proletarian" background headed the pupil self-government council and ran study and social circles, while the offspring of the bourgeoisie, like myself, were not admitted to the leadership of the community. Moreover, children of dealers who had profited from the New Economic Policy, priests and prosperous artisans had to pay monthly tuition fees.

We were made to feel outsiders by teachers who themselves had "class enemy backgrounds" and therefore sought to stress their loyalty to the Soviet system. They often tried to humiliate us in front of our fellow pupils. This state of affairs forced us to try to merge with the rest of the pupils, to lose our identity among

them. The school community did not rebuff pupils of non-working class origin who showed themselves eager to take part in public work. In fact, it displayed confidence in such pupils and encouraged them in every way to overcome their past.

Coming straight from the country, I naturally did my best to adopt all the new ways of the younger generation whom I had had no chance of knowing before. I was accepted by the school community. Among a new set of friends, I began to grow away from my family. I longed to watch the rite of Komsomol baptism, the so-called "October Ceremonies." I wanted to attend a city Pioneer rally, to take part in arranging Pioneer "campfires," to go on an excursion with the Pioneers to an agricultural commune and many other things besides. This longing to experience all these new impressions was so strong that already in 1928, instead of spending the Easter vigil with my family, I chose to remain in Penza to watch an anti-religious carnival which the Komsomol members had organized.

On various pretexts I stayed in town more and more often on Sundays. I also joined the drama circle and went three times a week to a "Liquidation of Illiteracy" circle in the suburbs, where I taught farmers to read and write. Together with the Pioneers and Komsomol members, I helped to prepare local farms for the sowing campaign. We sorted seed, distributed state loan certificates among the farmers, agitated for voluntary grain deliveries to the state, and so on.

Participation in public work was bound to influence my attitude to the old ways of life. Through reading contemporary writings on the subject and through comparing what I had read with the realities around me, I became convinced of the need to introduce new ways in the countryside by means of various kinds of cooperative organizations and state subsidies. Of course, at that time, I was still not fully familiar with all the problems of rural life. One thing, though, was quite clear to me: there could be no improvement in agriculture unless scientific methods were used. The way in which productivity had been raised, with the help of the state, by farmers who had adopted the new method of crop rotation and by the use of fertilizers and agricultural machinery, were plain to me and to my Komsomol friends. I was firmly convinced of the advantages of modern agricultural methods from my visits to the agricultural shows which were held every fall.

Thus I became a keen champion of Soviet policy in rural areas. I dreamed of becoming an agronomist, so as to help the farmers to overcome their poverty. The only cloud that hung over my future was my social background. Many of my older schoolmates who had finished school before me were unable to go on to college because of their non-proletarian origin. Some of them left for distant parts of Russia; others got their parents to change their occupation. Uncertainty as to the future worried me, too. In 1930, I left for Ryazan Oblast, where my uncle had an important post in a Soviet establishment. My intention was to ask him to adopt me, thereby making it possible for me to continue with my studies. My uncle's earnings, however, were meager, and he could not afford to keep me. Priests were being more heavily taxed at this time, and so there was no hope of assistance from my father either.

My whole outlook on life changed in the late fall of 1930. The mass collectivization of farms had begun. Former "model" farmers were being crippled by taxation so as to force them to join kolkhozes. A flight from the land started. The previous friendly attitude of the farmers toward the authorities changed to lack of confidence and alarm. Discontent began to ferment among my schoolmates. We no longer approved in our hearts those measures of the Soviet regime that we had once supported. We were terribly shaken by the tragedy of events. I sensed that harsh reprisals against the clergy were on the way. I tried to persuade my father to move elsewhere and change his type of occupation—to become an accountant or a teacher. He, however, had made up his mind to submit humbly to whatever was in store for him, and to remain at his post. As for me, I still had a way out. I could go as far away from home as possible and try to start life anew in a strange land. This I was soon forced to do.

One day in January 1931, upon my return home, I saw horses and a sledge standing before our porch. The harness was of military pattern. I had a premonition of evil and hurried in. A man in a long military overcoat was sitting on a chair. My father was quietly having his supper. Then he rose, said a prayer and turned to me: "Well, son, this is goodbye! Wherever you go, always remain with your own people!" They took him away.

The next day, two of my schoolmates and I set out for Tashkent, to seek our future. The trains were packed to the bursting point with peasants on the run from every part of the country. It took us a fortnight instead of five days to get to Tashkent from Penza. Central Asia gave us no welcome. There was nowhere to live. There was no work. We joined the waifs and strays and slept in the stables of the Tashkent caravansaries.

I must admit that my chances were better than those of the others. In return for a large bribe, I had obtained, before leaving, a false certificate which stated that I was the son of a laborer and a labor union card which gave my occupation as a shepherd boy. These documents helped me to be put on the labor exchange list and to draw unemployment relief.

I went to Alma-Ata in search of work. There the Kazakhstan People's Commissariat of Education gave me a job as instructor for the elimination of illiteracy among the workers of one of the sections of the Turkestan-Siberian Railroad. I settled down at Otar Station on the railroad.

As the supposed son of a laborer, I soon won the confidence of the Party and labor union officials under whose supervision I worked.

I should say that from the very first day I was conscientious about my work. My father's last words—"to remain always with my own people"—were firmly fixed in my mind. With these words to guide me, and seeing the obvious need to lift the people from their backward state, I did not begrudge the youthful energy that I expended on the school for illiterates. I soon caught the attention of my superiors as a hard worker. Kalashnikov, the secretary of the Otar Station Party organization, who at the same time was representative of the transport division of the OGPU, often used to ask me why I was not a member of the Komsomol. I would

reply that I did not yet feel worthy of this honor. In fact, however, the fear that my past would be found out when I joined held me back. Other Party officials also pressed me to join. Among them was V. P. Zotov, chairman of the local committee of the builders' union at Otar Station, later Minister of Food Industry. He tried to improve my living conditions and even had me moved to the Komsomol hostel. He hinted that I would be more inclined to find myself in communion with the Komsomol there.

Soon afterward, a letter reached me from home. It told of my father's tragic death. He had spent only five or six days under arrest. But a month after his release he had been secretly murdered by Komsomol members in the village who found in him an obstacle to their antireligious work. I was now an orphan. I had no further links with my past. The reasonable thing to do was obviously to continue along my new course.

I devoted all my efforts and my modest store of knowledge to this task. Early in 1932, I received a considerable promotion. I was appointed Raion Inspector. I moved to Alma-Ata. Here my direct supervisor was the chief of the "culture of the masses" section of the raion labor union, a Party member and a railroad man. When we began to know each other better, he, too, began pressing me to join the Komsomol. His argument was simpler and more convincing than the reasoning of my late bosses. He said that entry into the Komsomol would open up for me prospects of promotion in the service. I might be sent to attend courses. I might even be enrolled in a higher educational establishment.

By this time my mind was almost made up. I was completely indifferent about the organization; my only concern was to make a life for myself. It was obvious to me that my superiors were bound to be worried about my unwillingness to join. All my colleagues were either Komsomol or Party members. I was like an odd fish in the basket and felt awkward about it. Then I began to see that I was making a mistake; by not joining I was drawing attention to myself, and my superiors might begin to make enquiries about my past. In the spring of 1932, I applied for Komsomol membership.

My chief and the secretary of the Party cell both attended the meeting of the Komsomol railroad workers which examined my application. I told them the invented story of my life. The chief of the culture section gave a favorable account of my work. The secretary of the Party cell supported the recommendation of the culture section, after asking me questions about the statutes of the Komsomol. These were the only questions I was asked. I felt very uneasy about the false information I had given about my life. I need not have worried, however, for the meeting voted unanimously to accept me as a member of the Komsomol.

The second item for discussion on the agenda was the next month's plan of work for the organization. I could not help noticing that members of the Komsomol organization had little knowledge of political and organizational affairs. The Komsomol members listened in silence to the secretary of the Party organization. Some contributions were made by the chief of the culture section. The secretary of the Komsomol cell gave the impression of being a simple working lad without

any experience in organizational work. He was pleased to have a new member join and suggested my election to the commission for working out the plan. I was extremely surprised: I had been given a Komsomol task even before my membership had been confirmed by the Alma-Ata Komsomol City Committee. This showed that they had accepted me as one of their own. It gave me satisfaction and wiped away the disagreeable aftertaste of the lie I had been forced to tell.

I did my first job with the help of the chief of the culture section. I finished the outline of the plan, presented it to the commission, and a general meeting accepted it almost as it stood.

I was a regular and punctual attendant at Komsomol meetings. They were held once or twice a month, and I joined in the discussions. Komsomol labor unionists were often invited to take part in the sessions of the Party group of the raion labor union. I was among these and therefore found it much easier to take the correct line in discussions than the ordinary Komsomol workers did.

The Komsomol organization of the railroad was passive in its attitude. Indifference towards the questions discussed, failure to carry out Komsomol tasks and absence from meetings without good reason were typical failings. The secretary of the Party organization very rarely came to meetings. He was only interested in the minutes of plenary meetings. This cell was the very thing for me. I did not need to spend sleepless nights worrying about being found out.

My work very often forced me to visit other Komsomol organizations at various railroad stations in the raion to ask for their help. We organized special Komsomol teams, based them in certain localities, and made them responsible for seeing to it that adults attended the schools for illiterates.

I was increasingly being drawn into the struggle against illiteracy. I also frequently visited Kazakh settlements. The Kazakhs were very appreciative of education. I was the honored guest in any of their tents I might choose to visit. I came to realize that I was really doing something useful. The work absorbed me and I began to forget the reasons which had forced me to flee to Central Asia. In the summer of 1932, however, I witnessed events which shook me once again.

The forced collectivization campaign which had struck the central areas of the Soviet Union in 1929 now burst upon Kazakhstan. The Kazakhs rose in reply. The rebels seized a wide area between Lake Balkhash, the Chullisk Mountains, the Zaliisk Alatan, and the Ili River. They came close to the Turkistan-Siberian Railroad, and captured such settlements as Utar, Chelingan, Uzun-agach and Chu. Battles were raging four or five kilometers from Otar, the strong point of GPU troops.

This sudden and spontaneous outburst had caught the authorities unaware. It was only some months later that special task forces of the GPU were ordered to the area of the uprising. Pending the arrival of the troops the transport division of the GPU took on the defense of the railroad. They mobilized all Communists and Komsomol members and formed them into operational defense detachments. These operated far beyond the borders of the railroad settlements station. The detachments advanced to the neighboring settlements and went into action against rebels at the approaches to the railroad.

I was fortunately not mobilized, as I came under the People's Commissariat of Education. Being in the area of the uprising, however, I witnessed all that occurred. I saw how captured rebels were guarded by Komsomol members and mobilized youths commanded by GPU riflemen, and how the defense of the stations was organized. I also noticed the change of mood among the Komsomol members. At first their morale was rather high. They were carried away by the romantic aspect of the fight, and flattered by the government's trust in giving them arms. Soon, however, they were seized by panic when it became known that a mixed Party and Komsomol detachment had been destroyed near Chu Station. The punitive detachments were quick to spot this drop in morale and took steps to prevent desertions. Party and Komsomol detachments were disbanded and their personnel incorporated into special groups drawn from the railroad security troops. The Russian population of the stations, most of whom were there against their will (many had been assigned from other railroad systems, or had fled from collectivization in Central Russia), felt a hidden sympathy for the rebels. This attitude also affected the mood of the Komsomol members. None of the adults regarded the Komsomol task of keeping rebels prisoner under armed guards as honorable.

The shamefaced look of the Komsomol guards reminded me of the way my father had died. I felt disgust for an organization which forced its members to carry out this dirty punitive business against their will. I made up my mind to break with the Komsomol at the very first available opportunity. Such an opportunity soon came my way.

The climate of the area had affected my health, and in the fall of 1932 I caught malaria and had to leave my job. I was sent to South Kazakhstan by the People's Commissariat of Education. I failed to sign off the Komsomol roll and this meant automatic expulsion from the organization.

I was appointed to a job as a teacher in a village in Aryss Raion in South Kazakhstan. Here I found almost complete political apathy. The only Communist in the village administration was the chairman of the local Soviet. The Komsomol cell of about ten members played no part at all in the life of the village. The Komsomol members had no authority among the local people. They were despised as slackers whose only ambition was to get out of the village on the strength of their Komsomol cards. I kept my Komsomol past dark, and nobody asked me about it. I was now quite sure that I had rid myself for good of the stigma attached to the Komsomol. I was soon to find that I was wrong about this, however.

In the fall, at the height of work in the fields, various officials began to turn up from the raion center. They had come to speed up the plan for cotton deliveries to the State. One of these officials once asked me, in the course of a conversation, about my social origin and about my attitude to the Komsomol. This worried me. It seemed to me that the raion authorities were questioning my past. In that case my Komsomol card was my salvation. I answered that I was a pauper's son, and that I was in trouble with the Komsomol because I had not had time to sign off the roll. Anticipating further questions, I lied and said that I had written to the Alma-Ata Komsomol City Committee to ask to have my name taken off the roll, but so far had received no reply.



Some days later I was summoned to the raion committee of the Komsomol, immediately placed on its roll, and handed a letter addressed to my village cell. My illness, however, prevented me from doing any public work until January 1953 when I had completely recovered. I then reported to the cell and was immediately elected as its secretary.

In January and February, we launched a mass cultural campaign among the youth of the village. We organized club evenings, dances, and shows. When spring set in we had to stop our club activities; the raion committee had ordered us to detail all Komsomolites to the more important sections of the work on spring preparations. Two were made leaders of agricultural teams, one girl was appointed as head of a dairy farm, another as a tally clerk in the administration of the kolkhoz, etc. I was put in charge of agitation and propaganda work among the local population. My job was to visit the teams, read the press to them, lecture at meetings, and conduct political discussions during the noon break.

When work in the fields had reached its peak, I was made responsible for the production of the kolkhoz on the recommendation of the Komsomol raion committee. This first "Bolshevik spring" brought me many worries. The lack of transport and the absence of tractors on the kolkhoz held up the fulfillment of the sowing plan. Warning letters from the raion authorities about criminal responsibility if the plan should break down gave me no rest. The chairman of the village soviet and I went about the fields demanding written undertakings from team leaders, including Komsomol members, that they would fulfill the plan in time, although we ourselves did not believe that this was possible. Cotton sowing was particularly difficult. The plan had been stepped up. We had not the means at the kolkhoz to water the area before sowing, as the rules of agronomy require. The kolkhoz chairman was prepared to arrest one of the team leaders at random to save his own neck over the failure of the sowing campaign. And then a miracle intervened.

One day we happened to be out in the fields giving orders that could not be carried out, when we noticed a cloud. We knew from experience that one cloud did not necessarily mean rain, so we just continued with our tasks. Rain, however, did come. It was a downpour! We ran with the kolkhozniks (kolkhoz members) to the huts for shelter. Then something quite unexpected happened. The chairman of the village soviet, a Party member, a former Red partisan, and a man with a pistol in his pocket, seized me by the hand, rushed from the hut, and pulled me after him into the cloudburst, out of sight of the others. Then he swept off my cap and, falling on his knees, ordered me to pray. I followed his example. His joy passed on to me. The rain had saved us all from punishment. We then visited all the teams and destroyed the written orders which had been issued for signature to the team leaders.

We, like the neighboring villages and native settlements, were starving. All the grain ration we could issue was 300 grams a day to each collective farmer. This ration was drawn from grain advanced to us on the basis of the amount of cotton sowed. Our neighbors suffered from hunger far more than we did. Kazakhs who used to come to us begging for bread, would die where they fell in the lanes. One of

the victims was a Komsomol Kazakh. He was looking for wheat grains among the chaff of the previous year's harvest when the rick collapsed and killed him.

Then the harvest came. Visits by representatives of the raion and oblast authorities grew more and more frequent. There even appeared on the scene a permanent representative for the group of kolkhozes, a member of the board of the Kazakhstan People's Commissariat of Agriculture. He visited us almost every day and enquired into the progress of the cotton harvest. On his instructions I called a Komsomol meeting and officially organized a group of Komsomol members to guard the harvest. We put up watchtowers in the fields, and from these the Komsomol members helped the kolkhoz guards to keep an eye on the fields. It must be said that this sort of work was not to the liking of the Komsomol members. But terror born of the forced collectivization and fear of being labeled an aider and abetter of the "class enemy," forced them to do this job without showing their feelings.

In spite of these measures, the starving kolkhozniks helped themselves to ears of grain in the fields. One night, Komsomol teams from our kolkhoz caught a crowd of women from the neighboring farm in the act of gathering reaped grain. A fight ensued. The women, using their scythes, routed the Komsomol members and then vanished into the darkness. After this incident, Komsomol members were not eager to go and guard the grain, and, when they did go, they pretended not to notice anything. The representative of the People's Commissariat of Agriculture, himself used to check the Komsomol guard posts in the fields at night. There were frequent cases when he arrested starving collective farmers in the fields and brought them to our village, to be sent off to the raion center.

In spite of the passive attitude of the Komsomol members to their tasks, and this included me, our cell had a good reputation. It was often held up as an example to other cells, as our kolkhoz managed to keep abreast of the plans. Finally the Komsomol oblast committee decided to use us as a model. Boiko, a member of the bureau of the South Kazakhstan Komsomol oblast committee, arrived at our kolkhoz. He told us quite frankly that the oblast committee was seeking a pure propaganda effect and suggested that we step up our work even if only for ten to twelve days. We would then be able to look forward, so he said, to prospects somewhat better than mere village life. His frankness won us over.

It might be worth while to say something about this individual. He was a young man of twenty-five or twenty-six, evidently a student. He dressed simply and went about with an open shirt. Unlike the typical "representatives," he carried no briefcase. His small suitcase was packed full of books. Nobody had noticed his arrival in our midst. In his spare time he read all his own books, and then plunged into my stock of literature. He did not abuse his position. He ate with me, mainly skimmed milk which I brought from the dairy. And he had an obvious aversion for his task.

Together we worked out a model program for work, and detailed the people responsible for carrying it out. We then put it up for approval at the cell meeting. The arguments of the representative of the oblast committee convinced our Komsomol members that it really was important to increase the pace of work. I was

made responsible for obtaining situation reports from the Komsomol members and for publicizing the results of their work in the wall-newspaper. For ten days we met in the club in the evenings to sum up daily results. When the members of the oblast committee had collected all the facts about the ten-day period, he said goodbye and walked to the station. He left a good impression.

Some days later I was summoned to the oblast committee. At a bureau meeting Boiko reported that our cell had done an exemplary job. The result was that the oblast committee had sent a circular letter inviting other organizations to imitate our example.

Our ten-day shock effort did not improve the productivity of our collective farm. The plans for the grain harvest broke down for lack of labor, because some of the kolkhozniks had gone off to work in the city. Knowing how worn out and weak the farmers were, we broke all regulations and issued them part of the first grain to be thrashed, in accordance with the number of labor days put in by each of them. This got to the ears of the representative of the People's Commissariat of Agriculture. He appeared in the village and raved at the chairman of the village soviet, at the kolkhoz chairman and at me. He then ordered us to write the following from dictation: "We, the undersigned, having been influenced by hostile agitation, have deliberately prevented the fulfillment of the plan for state grain purchases, and have defrauded the Party and government." Having obtained this signed statement, the member of the People's Commissariat of Agriculture made us get into his car and drove us to see Ismailov, the secretary of the oblast Party committee, who was then touring the raion, to obtain his authority for our arrest and trial.

We told Ismailov the real reasons why we had delayed the fulfillment of the plan, and promised to catch up in five days. He let us go.

On our return that night, I immediately called a cell meeting and made each Komsomol member responsible for a particular job in the harvest, without regard to the opinions and wishes of individual members. A day later we took a "Red Convoy" of grain to the delivery point.

The kolkhoz had not one pound of grain left for its members. Even so, the state delivery plan was not entirely fulfilled. The kolkhoz chairman was removed from his job and sent off to be tried. To avoid punishment, I handed over the school property to a member of the school soviet and went off without authority to the neighboring raion of Samara. There I immediately found work in a distant village.

Rumors reached me that I had been expelled from the Komsomol for leaving work without permission. This did not frighten me at all. I had kept my Komsomol card. I could see for myself the poor state of Komsomol work in the provinces. The shortage of experienced officials in the lower cells meant that I could not fail to regain my rights as a Komsomol member at my new place of work. This was exactly what happened. I was enrolled on my arrival in the new Komsomol raion.

I would like to say something about the Samara raion committee to illustrate the state of Komsomol organizations in South Kazakhstan generally. The raion

committee had its headquarters in a one-room peasant mud hut, the shutters of which were half hanging off their hinges. The apparatus of the raion committee consisted of a secretary, a twenty-five-year-old Kazakh; a young girl who was the bookkeeper; and an instructor, a somewhat primitive and featureless Russian lad. All of them had to share this one room. All the files of the raion committee—registers, accounts, minutes, instructions, and the rest—were kept in a drawer of the secretary's desk.

The raion committee secretary was not in the least interested in who I was and where I came from. He cast a stray glance at my Komsomol card, nodded and said: "We'll work together." He then buried himself in some documents.

At my new place of work I found myself in a large teaching community where teaching took first place, while "social" work was considered of secondary importance. The school was in a big and prosperous village of about a hundred and fifty farmsteads. Most of its inhabitants were settlers from the time of the Stolypin reforms and had come from the central areas of Russia and from the Ukraine.

The Komsomol organization of this village was entirely made up of representatives of the young village intelligentsia, such as the kolkhoz chairmen, the team leaders, the accountants, the storekeepers, etc. The abler of the native Kazakhs, especially the Party members among them, tried to enter this group. They usually managed this easily because the bulk of the native population was generally opposed to collectivization and had no interest in kolkhoz administration. A local Party man, if appointed chairman of a village soviet or of a kolkhoz, usually tried to get his relatives and friends into the other administrative posts. Thus groups of local administrators were formed, tied by mutual bonds. Profiting from the lack of supervision, they squandered kolkhoz property and appropriated considerable quantities of goods issued by the State. They treated the kolkhozniks arrogantly. They paid out bribes to protect themselves from interference by the police and the Prosecutor's office. They were feared by the kolkhozniks. The only fly in the ointment was the arrival of officials accustomed to social discipline. I know of a case, for instance, when a Kazakh Komsomol teacher reported the misdeeds of a kolkhoz administration to the oblast newspaper *Pravda Yuzhnogo Kazakhstana* (South Kazakhstan Pravda) and for this was thrown from a high bridge into the Aksu mountain torrent. Later, I was to experience the power of a ring in the local administration in my own case.

Early in 1934, political departments were set up at machine and tractor stations (MTS). Our school was visited by the assistant chief of the political department of the Komsomol, an energetic and likeable fellow. He managed to make our cell take a keen part in the life of the kolkhoz. One of the teachers who had been a charter member of the kolkhoz, was elected cell secretary. Each Komsomol member was allotted a task. I was made responsible for agitation on one of the field teams.

I decided that my first task was to make the kolkhozniks familiar with the statutes of agricultural workers' associations and with their rights. Meanwhile,

the cell secretary attacked the ring of local authorities for their neglect of the interests of the kolkhozniks. He managed to discover thefts of kolkhoz grain by some managers. The latter had the backing of the raion officials; they bribed the Prosecutor and so managed to avoid responsibility. Then the political department intervened. The culprits were punished. We were triumphant—but prematurely so. The raion authorities sent to the village a new administration which, as we later discovered, had been instructed to take revenge on the Komsomol teachers whom the political department had supported. They began to make life difficult for us in a personal and material way. They kept back our pay. They failed to issue our rations.

My attitude to the Komsomol started to change again with the appearance of the political department of the MTS. The struggle with the ring of the local administration won my sympathy. The implacable attitude of the assistant chief of the political department toward the local Soviet authorities, who lorded it over the ordinary kolkhozniks, enhanced the prestige of the Komsomol in my eyes. I began to take an increasingly active part in the work of the Komsomol cell, not because I was anxious about my career but because I wanted to help this cell to assert its authority among the kolkhozniks, and to win their trust. I helped to bring out the wall news-sheet which publicized the life of the kolkhozes, I lectured on the international situation and I advised the secretary of the organization on means of improving the work of the cell.

Toward the end of 1935, young men in my position were granted a certain degree of reprieve. Playing at being magnanimous, Stalin announced that “a son is not answerable for his father!” This gave me a promise of release from the constant fear that my social origin would be discovered. The pronouncement was followed by the cancellation of all limitations on enrollment in the Komsomol. The regime appeared to be becoming more democratic.

Party fervor slackened noticeably in the village. The stormy years when the kolkhozes were being consolidated by two sets of authorities, the political departments and the raion Party committees, gave way to a quieter life. I no longer had to be responsible for carrying out agricultural campaigns. Most of my time was now spent in teaching.

This was the time that many of the peasants who had fled to the cities during collectivization began flocking back to their native villages. Having found it difficult to adjust to city life, they now entered kolkhozes and did their best to accept them. The number of pupils in the schools increased considerably in those years. Among the children now attending school were some who had missed several years of schooling because their parents had constantly changed their residence. There were many other children who had managed to spend two or three months at a time in the fifth and sixth grades of secondary schools but had been unable to get any further. These now wanted to complete their seven-year education. Our school, however, had only four grades.

I approached first the raion and then the oblast educational authorities and explained to them the need for a seven-year school in the village. I was told that this had not been foreseen in the budget. I again wrote to the oblast department

of education; the answer was: "Build a school yourself, we cannot finance you." Despairing of my efforts to overcome the bureaucratic machine of the oblast organs I decided to turn to the kolkhozniks for help.

I first went to the homes where there were children, and talked to their parents. I then spoke at village meetings. I succeeded in getting every kolkhoz household to contribute one poplar tree for the school building. I collected my future pupils and we built the walls of the school with these poplars. We now needed wood for the floor and for the ceiling. I persuaded the kolkhoz chairman to put in a requisition for timber, allegedly for building a livestock farm, but in fact for the school. He agreed, and I obtained the timber from the oblast land department. All this took time. Eventually the timber was delivered, but the kolkhoz chairman seized it, on "legal grounds," for the use of the farm.

I had to wait until the beginning of the new financial year (there is no getting around the annual budget) to repeat my scheme regarding the timber for the "livestock farm." Finally, in 1937, a seven-year secondary school (still without the full number of grades) was opened in the village.

The kolkhoz members saw my interest in their children and, in appreciation of what I had done for them, elected me to the local soviet at the next elections. Later I was elected deputy chairman of this soviet.

The Komsomol teachers and I played an active part in the soviet's cultural work for the masses. Later I took charge of this work, and very often had to make reports at kolkhoz meetings. We succeeded in organizing weekly film shows and started a village theater.

I must say, in justice to myself, that when I began to feel safe about my private life I became very genuinely conscious of my duties to the people and to the state. At this time I was entirely on the side of the Soviet regime in connection with many of the Party's political problems in the village. For instance, I sincerely believed that loans issued by the government were really used to improve the public welfare. Once, however, I did take an opportunist line in this connection. I expressed disagreement with the plan for contributing to government loans on the grounds that it was beyond the ability of the population to pay. For this I received a severe warning from the raion executive committee. The plan had to be fulfilled, and this entailed the use of doubtful methods. As a victim of my "diplomacy" I chose the accountant of the local artisans' association, a man who was fairly critical of the measures of the Soviet regime. I knew that this man belonged, by origin, to the former bourgeoisie and suggested that he subscribe to the loan at once. I made it clear to him that a refusal would be interpreted as deliberate sabotage of the state loan campaign. He at once grasped his position and not only signed for a monthly deduction from his wages, but persuaded all other members to do likewise. This accountant then became a warm supporter of all state campaigns. He even became an "activist," was elected to the administration of the artisans' association, and finished by applying for Party membership.

I welcomed the plan for the new Constitution with great enthusiasm. I thought that the new Constitution would put an end to the tyranny of the local authorities

in their relations with ordinary Soviet citizens, that it would protect everyone by its laws, and, above all, that the principle of secret balloting would make it possible to elect decent people to the organs of the Soviet regime. I was one of the local organizers of the election campaign just before the November 1937 elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. I realized my mistake a little later, when I saw for myself that only one man remained out of the whole list of candidates.

Occasionally, I got to know of the arrest of former responsible officials in the labor unions, the People's Commissariat of Education or the Komsomol. Among them were many who had made life hard for me. This is why I failed to understand what lay behind the Yezhov terror. The revelations of the Moscow show trials appeared to me to be sober truth. This enabled me to speak at kolkhoz meetings with genuine anger.

I will quote a typical case. In 1932, I had to ask for the help of the Kazakhstan People's Commissariat of Education. I was sent to Tashtitov, the Deputy Commissar for Education. He was a young Party member, short in stature, with a pockmarked face. He received me, sprawling all over his chair. When I told him that there were no copybooks, textbooks, nor kerosene in the school for illiterates, he jumped up and shouted at me: "Why bother me with your copybooks! I know all about it anyhow! You don't have to tell me! You have put in your requisition—well, just wait! Don't interfere with my work! Every Tom, Dick, and Harry, can't come pestering the Deputy Commissar for Education about kerosene!"

Five years later Tashtitov, who by then had become First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Kazakhstan Komsomol, was unmasked as an "enemy of the people." I must admit that I felt no sympathy whatever for him.

When the seven-year school had been opened, the village Komsomol organization was split into a kolkhoz branch and a school branch. At the start, the school branch of the Komsomol was made up solely of Komsomol teachers—myself and six other young teachers. It was soon broadened, however, to include older backward pupils.

It was easy to persuade these young people to join the Komsomol. The prospects enjoyed by Komsomol members, and the possibility of later joining the Party which ruled the country, were a convincing attraction. We tried to give each some social task to fulfill before he joined the Komsomol in order to raise his prestige among the other pupils. We had received no special directive about this from above, except for occasional reminders about the slow growth of our organization. Our main motive was the memory of our own hard struggle, which prompted each of us Komsomol teachers to try to make things easier for his charges.

Our organization soon had about twenty members among the pupils. I accompanied many of them to the Komsomol Committee for the confirmation of their membership. As a rule, the boys and girls felt very awkward on these occasions, but when all was over they went away greatly elated. Usually the raion committee secretary congratulated the new Komsomol members after they had been confirmed and called on them to play an active part in the common task.

The problems which we discussed in our cell in the presence of pupils who were Komsomol members did not go beyond the normal interests of the pupils' community and the social work of the school. It cannot be said that the pupils took an active part in these discussions. They listened to what we had to say and always agreed with the teachers' suggestions. They carried out to the letter the tasks set them by the teachers and the cell. These tasks mainly consisted in working with the Pioneers, in organizing voluntary circles, arranging evening entertainments, etc.

Early in 1939, there was a check of Komsomol documents and the raion committee of the Komsomol was strengthened. Before this the officials of the raion committee had changed so often that I cannot remember any of their names. Now Burmistrov was appointed first secretary of the raion committee and later elected at the raion conference. He was about twenty-seven years old. He came to the raion from the Army, where he had been a junior commanding officer. His first job was that of military instructor at an intermediate school.

From the start, Burmistrov changed the ways of the organization. Always neatly dressed in the military style, he was self-controlled and polite. His very appearance called for action from every one of his Komsomol subordinates. He watched the register of Komsomol members strictly, ably deploying his officials and demanding punctual reporting. The raion committee moved to new and larger premises. Safes and typewriters were installed.

At this time, as I have already said, my social work consisted of cultural tasks among the kolkhozniks. In those days I felt that I was a full Soviet citizen.

I was happy over the victories of our armed forces and over the annexation of the Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia to the USSR. I believed that Finland really had attacked the Soviet Union. Only one thing puzzled me—the pact with Nazi Germany. Hatred of Fascism had become an integral part of me. It was the Fascists who were trying to wreck Dimitrov the Revolutionary. It was they who were burning the books of democratic writers in public squares. Whenever I spoke in the presence of kolkhozniks, at Pioneer campfires or at teachers' conferences, I always drove home the truth about Fascism. Then came 1939, and I had to keep silent.

Particular questions of Party policy with which I did not agree were, however, dismissed as time brought new events in the life of Soviet society. These events were greatly publicized by Soviet propaganda.

In the fall of 1940, I was called up for the Red Army. Up until then my military service had been deferred from year to year because I was a teacher. In the Army, I was a member of the squadron Komsomol organization. The Komsomol, however, played no part in the life of the Army. All that happened was that the squadron organization used to call periodic meetings at which some wretched Komsomol member or other would be abused for poor military training. This was a duplication, in diluted form, of abuse from senior officers and Komsomol meetings therefore seemed to me to be a boring and unnecessary waste of the Red Army Komsomol members' spare time.



I spent nine years in the Komsomol. To give this organization its due, it must be admitted that for the great majority of its members it was a real source of political education. The young had their first experience of organization and administration in the Komsomol. In addition, Komsomol meetings and the various social tasks were good training for the young, even if this training was limited to the spirit required by the Party and deflected them from all other influences. In my work with children I cannot recall any instance of children being inspired to denounce their parents in the spirit of Pavlik Morozov, but I know of cases where Komsomol members left their parents because they could not reconcile themselves to their political views. This was particularly evident during the first years of collectivization.

I cannot say that the pace of work of the Komsomol remained steady during the period when I belonged to it. Times of romantic endeavor alternated with periods of apathy, especially from 1932 to 1936. In the years just before the war, the activity of the rural Komsomol again increased, since the Soviet government was particularly liberal with rewards at that time. Many Komsomol members sought to be placed among the leaders who were honored by the local or central authorities. They worked hard themselves and attracted potential Komsomol members by their example.

The Komsomol is in fact ruled by the Party. Depending on time and circumstances, the Party always finds ways and means of inspiring enthusiasm in the young. Although most Komsomol members find themselves, on occasions, at odds with some Party decisions and there are often personal injustices on the part of senior Party and Komsomol officials, yet each, at some time or other, will struggle militantly and conscientiously for the practical realization of Party directives.

My membership in the Komsomol ended early in 1942. On breaking out from enemy encirclement in mid-winter 1941, I was arrested by the Special Department of the NKVD and was convicted by a military tribunal in January 1942. The sentence recorded me as a "member of the All-Union Lenin Communist Youth Association." This meant that while my case was being investigated I had still not been excluded from the Komsomol. My exclusion was the result of the sentence.

In spite of my "bourgeois" background and of the undeserved humiliations heaped on my father and myself by the Soviet regime, in spite of the times when I wavered in my membership, I do not blame myself for having been a member of the Komsomol. My reason is that all my modest efforts in the Soviet Union were devoted to the people. I, as a particle of Soviet society, had a full share of the tragedies experienced by the people. Therefore, even though I now thoroughly understand the meaning of the system and have come to hate it implacably, I do not see why I should blame myself for the path I took which began with the enthusiasm of youth and ended with the shattering of illusions.

OLEG KRASOVSKY

## Early Years

My father, born into a peasant family, was orphaned in his early childhood. His schooling was haphazard, but he succeeded in gaining a secondary school diploma. He then entered a higher technical institute and successfully completed the course. By 1917 he was already a well-established construction engineer. He greeted the Revolution with cold indifference and thought that "the mutiny without meaning or mercy" would soon end, that passions would subside, and that life would again become normal. Politics he mentioned only over evening tea. Then he would talk with equal sarcasm about the Bolsheviks and about those on whose account, as he put it, the people suffered—those "who before the Revolution had tens of thousands of acres, but did not even know how wheat grew from the ground."

My father was an expert in his line. At the start of the NEP (New Economic Policy) period the Bolsheviks offered him an excellent position in view of his experience and creative talent.

My mother was the daughter of a bank official who until the age of twenty-two had scratched about with a hoe in a remote village of Tver Guberniya.

His life was so unusual that it deserves a few words itself. He grew up in a poor peasant family, an illiterate but clever lad. The man in charge of the state liquor store in the village was an ardent chess player. To have something to do, he taught my grandfather the game and played it with him long into the night. Time went on, and the boy overtook his teacher. They began to play for money; one kopek a game. One night the storekeeper, having had too much to drink, lost five rubles to his opponent, a big sum in those days. The next day he doubled the stakes, tried to win back what he had lost, and lost again. In the end my grandfather won all that the storekeeper had made during the month and should have put in the bank. Then the storekeeper came to his senses and threw himself on my grandfather's mercy. My grandfather let him off, but demanded in return to be taught to read and write. By 1908 he had become the chief cashier of the Moscow City Savings Bank; he had managed to put his children—my mother and her three sisters—through secondary school, and had succeeded in saving twenty thousand rubles, though these, of course, lost their value during the Revolution.

And so my parents' roots go back into the peasantry and the land. My mother was ashamed of this at times, but my father boasted of it and would stress that he was the son of a penniless peasant, and had himself worked as a farm-hand.

I was born in Moscow in 1919. In 1926 the family moved to Kiev, where father intended to settle. He bought a private house with a fine garden on Bibikov

Boulevard. We often had visitors until late in the evening. On summer nights they would sit on the vine-covered veranda endlessly drinking tea with apples or homemade jam. No matter what the conversations started with, they would always come back to reminiscences of the "peaceful time." This "peaceful time" seemed so wonderful in these descriptions that I came to feel deeply hurt that I had not lived in those splendid days.

Sometimes the phonograph, a monstrous machine with an enormous trumpet, would be taken out onto the veranda. Then the hoarse tones of the ballad "The Autumn Flowers Long Since Have Faded" would float out into the garden. The talk would switch to Panina and Vyaltseva. Stories about Chaliapin would be exchanged, and Father would speak of his friendship with Morfessi, who, everyone said, was living in great luxury abroad.

My parents' acquaintances were of a variety of social and national backgrounds. They were all united, however, in their dislike of the Soviet regime.

I had a sunny and carefree childhood. When I was six I was given a tutor, Pavel Agafonovich. He taught me reading, writing, and arithmetic, and also religion. I was exasperated by my tutor's obvious indifference to the meaning of the prayers that I repeated after him. Pavel Agafonovich thought it nonsensical and disgusting when I asked questions about such problems as the tailoring of the shirts that the saints in Heaven wore in holy pictures, or why the angels had wings, and God had none. He refused to answer them and has the unflattering distinction of being the main reason why religion found no place or echo in my soul as a child, and has found none since. Prayers became a tiresome obligation. I rattled them off after my tutor and if, out of sheer boredom, I tried to think about the meaning of the words, they seemed funny and unreasonable to me, and wholly unnecessary.

I did not work particularly hard at school and up to the fifth grade my record was only fair. Once when I brought my half-year marks home, my father threw my report card on the floor and exclaimed to my mother: "Look at the results of your education! He's growing up a dunderhead and he'll end up herding sheep!" After this I was sent to the corner and made to kneel there. I was put in the corner fairly often, for an hour, or two, or even three, depending on the gravity of my offense. Once I had been put there nobody paid any attention to me any more, and I very quickly discovered that, hidden from my parents' eyes by the high back of the sofa, I could pleasantly spend the time of my punishment playing with a variety of things I had concealed under the sofa beforehand.

At the same time, I was passionately fond of reading. The first book I read was Sienkiewicz's novel *With Fire and Sword* which had fallen into my hands by chance. I understood very little of it, but the brave Pan Zagloba has remained in my mind ever since. I read Jules Verne, Louis Boussenare, Mayne Reid, and Fenimore Cooper when I was only nine or ten. My father gave me two rubles every week to buy books. As soon as I had bought a new one, I would streak home. First I would look at the illustrations, then I would climb into Father's leather armchair with a good supply of raisins from my mother's cupboard and read avidly.

On one occasion my father made a disparaging remark about Jules Verne. "A pretty fantasy to amuse children," he said, and I felt something collapse within me, as though the world had been shattered to its foundations.

By the time I was eleven I owned a substantial library which included, among others, adventure novels, a whole series of *Golden Treasury* books, and a full pre-revolutionary edition of the excellent *Children's Encyclopedia*.

I never once met the words: "Communism," "Socialism," or "Soviet regime" in the books that I read. Nor were we told anything about politics at school. There our subjects were grammar, arithmetic, elementary geography, botany, and physics. My reading anthology had only one story about Lenin and his love for children. On the anniversary of Lenin's death the teacher told us something dull and boring about him.

During this period my life was packed with the innumerable things boys do. The beginning of spring meant the start of a marvellous time of boat building and launching, and of mill and dam construction which resulted in my coming home soaked and having to be sent to bed for a few days. The summer brought three months of holidays, and with them fishing, expeditions without my parents' knowledge to "a distant land" (an overgrown piece of wasteland on the outskirts of the city), games of Indians and pirates, fights with boys from the neighboring street, and other delights that made life beautiful and satisfying. The sunny fall in Kiev was the season for breaking into other peoples' gardens, no attention being paid, of course, to the vast quantities of fruit in our own. Stealing apples and pears from other peoples' orchards was an absorbing and dangerous sport, the test of a boy's courage. In the late fall we would go to the South for from four to six weeks, to the Caucasus or to the Crimea.

I had two kinds of friends. On the one hand, there were the boys from the house next door, or "Number Eighty," as my people called it. Most of the parents of these boys worked in a tobacco plant and left the children's education entirely to the school, the street, and the other boys. These lads were not under the constant supervision of grownups, the latter only appearing from time to time to administer sound beatings for broken windows or torn pants. Thus, the boys grew up as they liked, and it was interesting and entertaining to spend one's time in their company.

My mother was extremely dubious about my affection for my contemporaries from "Number Eighty." She sometimes even categorically forbade me "to run around with those street urchins." These instructions, however, had no effect on me. In spite of the fact that there was a social difference between my friends at "Number Eighty" and myself, neither they nor I took any notice of this, and with them I felt an equal among equals.

My other group of friends were the children of my parents' acquaintances. These were the children of "decent families." They behaved in an orderly and well-bred fashion as long as they were under the eyes of their parents, but in their hearts they thought they were unhappy and envied those children of the same age who could climb fences and trees without being punished, and go barefoot in all kinds of weather. I did not like this group much.

Once a year, usually during the winter holidays, my mother took me to Moscow for two weeks. My grandfather and grandmother lived there, as well as one aunt and a number of other more distant relatives whom I knew only slightly.

I do not want to go into all the relationships in my family, but I should like to mention the attitude of my father toward V. I. Moroz, my aunt's husband. I only properly understood this attitude myself much later when I was already in my teens.

I knew little about the early life of Moroz. He took an active part in the Revolution of 1917. He spent the Civil War on various fronts and commanded first a regiment, then a brigade, and finally an army corps. He had been awarded the "Order of the Red Banner," a sword of honor, and a number of citations. He was closely connected with Lenin, Frunze, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Demyan Bedny, and Sarafimovich and his friends. He studied after the conclusion of the Civil War and then held high administrative appointments as director of a number of large industrial undertakings in Moscow, such as the Moscow Oblast Power Station, the VChS Factory (later known as the Ordzhonikidze Factory), the Moscow-Urals Transformer Factory, etc. Moroz was a dedicated Communist and maintained his faith to the end.

He got to know my father during the Civil War period, and it so happened that at the very first meeting they did not take to each other. Moroz described my father as "an intelligent capitalist parasite;" my father, on the other hand, once called him "a Communist and a secret-police man, though not quite as bad as he might be." After this early acquaintance, the brothers-in-law did not meet again, but it should be said for Moroz that he never used his position to do my father any harm.

Whenever my mother and I were in Moscow we called on the Moroz family and were received with open arms, but Moroz took no interest in our life in Kiev and never asked about my father. My father, for his part, never inquired about the Moroz family when my mother returned to Kiev.

And so my childhood was passed in complete isolation from the political events around me.

I knew, of course, that once upon a time, very long ago, "in peacetime," there had been a tsar who had been killed by the Bolsheviks, and that I was living under the Soviet regime. I had no conception, however, of what were the essential differences between this regime and the tsarist one. I only knew from conversations at home that life had been easier before, and that the Soviet regime was "a boorish regime." At the same time I sometimes heard at school that the tsar had been harsh to the workers and peasants, and that they had called him "Bloody Little Nicholas."

An event occurred about 1938 which made a great impression on me.

One of my father's friends dropped in to see us. He was excited by some news he had heard. In the early morning a watchman had discovered in the Kupechesky Garden a relief, over six feet high, carved into the trunk of an old oak and running

right around the tree. It depicted the sufferings of the people under the Soviet regime. Lenin was shown as Satan, surrounded by devils torturing people. My father's friend said that people were crowding to the garden. There was a rumor going around the city that supernatural forces had done the carving, because it was difficult to imagine one, or even two or three, artists completing the whole carving in a single night, while the watchman swore that there had been nothing there the night before.

My father, who was not usually carried away by sensational events, expressed a wish to go to the Kupechesky Garden. I pleaded to be taken along. We took a cab. Near the Kupechesky Garden (which nobody called by its new name, "The Proletarian Garden") there was an unusually large crowd. A detachment of militiamen refused to let anyone in. The crowd was saying that the authorities had ordered the tree cut down, and that this order was being carried out.

That evening over tea they talked about the tree in the Kupechesky Garden and about the brave artist. Then they passed on to what they had experienced during the years of the Revolution and the Civil War.

Until then my sympathies had quite unconsciously been on the side of the Reds. They were honorable and brave heroes in Soviet films, while the White Guards were shown as bandits. I discovered, however, from the stories told on that memorable evening, that my father and our friends had seen and experienced things that threw an altogether different light on the Reds. I remember scraps of what was said about seeing the Reds nailing down the shoulder-straps of captured officers with inch-long nails. Somebody told the story of the execution of a White officer who, before he was shot, asked for some liquor, emptied the container in one gulp, and shouted: "Now fire, you skunks!" I listened eagerly to these tales. They did not, however, leave a particularly deep impression on me and they soon faded under the influence of new impressions and experiences.

In 1929 I took part in a May Day demonstration for the first time. Marching in the first rank immediately behind the band with its polished brasses glittering in the spring sunshine, we small boys were overwhelmed by the thought that we had been allowed to take part in a march of several hours along the Kreshchatka. All around us, in front and behind, there was a sea of faces, the snapping of canvas banners, and the thundering of the band.

Nobody held my hand as my mother usually did when we got into a crowd. I was on my own. •

My feet were stepped on, but I paid no attention, and stepped on the heels of those in front of me myself, whenever I fell out of step. The whole occasion was thoroughly moving and exhilarating. In the course of a few hours I had time to learn a couple of revolutionary songs which were very much more to my taste than the tedious gramophone airs, like "The Autumn Flowers Long Since Have Faded," which I heard too often. My head held high with pride, I bawled "Our Engine Rushes Forward to the Commune, Its First Stop" and saw in my mind the shining engine carrying everybody at high speed into the enticing distance.

The boys from "Number Eighty" spent the whole of the following week playing at demonstrations; the younger ones marched about the yard, roaring out songs and waving paper flags left over from the great day, while the older ones climbed onto a cart that was standing nearby and reviewed the parade.

Some time after the May Day holiday, I saw something happen in Kiev, although I could not understand what I saw. I think even the grownups could not make out exactly what had happened, and it has stuck in my mind ever since.

I was coming back from fishing with a friend of mine. As we approached the Jewish Bazar we sensed that something was wrong. In spite of the fact that it was late afternoon, there were many people about. Shouts could be heard. A group of mounted militiamen passed the crowd at full gallop. Cursing and whistling followed them. We dived into the milling mass of humanity. In the crowd several men from the Lenin Forge Works were telling about something that had happened at the plant.

In the meantime, somewhere beyond the blocks of houses, many voices singing in chorus began "Comrades, Bravely, All in Step." A wave of humanity rushed towards the singers and jettisoned us off the sidewalk and into the street. We noticed a vegetable stall nearby and climbed onto its roof. Before us unfolded the picture of a solid mass of people moving slowly toward us from the direction of the station. The individuals in it had been welded into a single block, shoulder to shoulder, walking out of step, and the song rang out over them. There were a few red flags at the head of the column, but I immediately sensed that this demonstration was different from the one I had so recently attended.

Suddenly odd clapping sounds rang out from the direction of Shevchenko (formerly Bibikov) Boulevard. The people standing around us froze for a moment, then suddenly scattered. A volley of rifle fire burst out. Not understanding what was going on, we rushed off head over heels for my friend's house as fast as our legs would carry us.

My friend's father did not even have time to scold us. A fresh burst of fire rang out in the street. Broken glass tinkled.

The bursts of firing soon died down. Now only single revolver shots could be heard, and the footsteps of people running—not a crowd, now, but individuals. Soon all was still.

I never did find out what was really behind this event. I only knew from my parents' conversations that a wave of arrests swept the Lenin Forge Works after this, and that several workmen were executed.

Clouds began to gather on the political horizon at the start of the thirties. The NEP period was on its last legs. Some of our acquaintances left town, some were arrested. My father decided to move to a new place. He sold the house in the spring of 1931, and we moved to Moscow where we settled in a large three-room apartment not far from Samotechnaya Square. A little later we bought a small villa with a fruit garden near Moscow. My father took employment at the People's Commissariat of Agriculture. I was sent to the fifth grade of the school run for this department.

If school education in Kiev had hardly any connection with politics, in Moscow, on the other hand, its political bias was immediately obvious. At the very start of the school year, in order not to stand out from my classmates, I was solemnly sworn into the Pioneers, received a red neckerchief, and began to take an active part in various Pioneer meetings and assemblies.

During social science classes my initiation into the political situation and life in the country started with a study of Stalin's "Six Conditions" which, we were told, were historic.

Paya Abramovna, our social science teacher and the only Party member on the teaching staff, painted a picture of the future socialist society for us in the brightest colors and pointed out the advantages of collectivization of the peasant economy.

At the same time Moscow was being flooded with destitute, famished peasants in tatters with their hungry children wrapped in rags. Once, in the early morning, I saw two porters and a cart driver loading onto a cart a peasant who had either died or been frozen to death at the door of a Moscow house.

A pupil once asked Paya Abramovna where these wretched peasants had come from. She told him that they were lazy people who did not want to work on the land, and that the Militia would soon clear them out of town. Moscow was, in fact, cleared of beggars by the middle of the winter, but they were replaced by young peasants who had come up from the country to look for work and an easier life in the capital.

Moscow at that time was living on rations like the rest of the country. As a member of the Institute of Technical Workers, my father was registered at the restricted "B" stores where adequate quantities of all goods could be purchased upon presentation of a special pass. I believe, looking back on my reactions as a child, that this example of inequality and injustice also left its trace on me.

Our life in Moscow was very different from the old life in Kiev. My father did not wish to revive old friendships and was wary of new ones. "The times have changed," he would say, when my mother suggested that someone might be asked to the house.

My semi-sheltered existence came to an end in Moscow. Pioneer meetings, various circles—I was keen on acting and building model airplanes—and the brigade system of education, which involved doing homework with my classmates, all these left me with very little time at home after school was over. After lunch I would again disappear for two or three hours until supper. Communal work in the Pioneer troop gradually absorbed me, and I remember how pleased I was when I became a section leader.

I went to the October Revolution Day demonstration with happy excitement. I felt shivers of emotion running down my spine as our column swung into the Red Square where a gigantic band was thundering away. As we passed the Mausoleum nearly at a run, I craned my neck in an effort to recognize Stalin among those on the government stand. I did not see him, but I did spot Kalinin's white beard.



My love of reading continued after we came to Moscow, but my taste underwent a change. I became indifferent to Jules Verne and the other faithful companions of my childhood. My father gave me a complete set of Jack London's works. I read the novels of Hugo, Scott, Dumas and Eugène Sue avidly; I admired H. G. Wells; I tried to read Upton Sinclair, Stendhal, and Zola. I also read Soviet authors and particularly liked Alexei Tolstoy's *The Hyperboloid of Engineer Garin* and Neverov's *Tashkent—City of Bread*. I tried to tackle the Russian classics, but found them uninteresting, except for Chekhov's stories and Gogol's *Dead Souls*.

I had only begun to go to movies in Kiev, and in Moscow I encountered a whole repertoire that was largely unknown to me. There were still a few Wild Westerns shown, starring Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, and Harold Lloyd, but the majority of the Moscow movie theaters were already showing politically slanted Soviet movies.

In spite of my growing interest in political events, I did not read the newspapers. If I did pick one up, I merely looked at the pictures and glanced quickly through the articles. A little later, though, I had to force myself to look at them more closely for the following reason.

One evening at supper my father, who read only *Izvestia*, put it aside and began to discuss political events in Germany with my mother. I was reading a book and was paying no particular attention to what my father was saying, although a few scraps stuck in my mind. Among them was the fact that a struggle was going on between Hitler and Thälmann, and that if Thälmann got the upper hand—which my father would not believe on the grounds that the Germans were a sensible people—everything in Germany would turn out as badly as it had for us.

At a social science class a few days later Paya Abramovna told us that in Germany a party had come to power which was driving the country into terror and economic chaos. She noticed that I was deep in conversation with my neighbor and suddenly asked me the name of the Fascist leader. I hurriedly tried to remember what I had heard from my father and answered: "Thälmann." The reply was greeted with general laughter. From then on I regularly read the paper.

I turned from an average pupil into an outstanding one in the seventh grade. I was elected assistant troop leader and a member of the school committee.

I became completely absorbed in my studies and in my communal work. My mother's pleas were unable to shift me from the path which I had unconsciously taken. It is hard to say with complete detachment twenty years later whether it was the actual idea of Communism that attracted me and drove me into political and social activity, or whether my boyish vanity was flattered by a certain show of authority and power acquired through active participation in the communal life of the school and the troop. It was probably a little of both.

Occasionally I tried to talk to my father about developments in the country. My father did not refuse to discuss them, but the arguments that he used, his comparisons with the past and his remarks that I was still small and incapable of understanding, all appeared to me to spring from the older generation's refusal to move aside and surrender its place to the younger one.

I should stress in connection with our political education at school that it was almost entirely confined to the influence of the then fashionable study of social science, and to a lesser extent to the effect of the Pioneer organization. In general, the teachers of other subjects in the seven-year school did their best to give us knowledge without political ballast.

I never asked my school friends home, although I had visited some of them myself. I was shy of letting them see my home surroundings, which appeared to me almost "bourgeois" and therefore upset me. My friends' families lived in tiny rooms, and, by comparison with these, our apartment with its antique furniture, carpets, bookcases, piano, and all the knick-knacks, appeared the height of luxury and comfort.

Something happened in February 1954 which divided my life into two sharply distinct periods. The GPU arrested my parents.

I knew the attitude of my parents toward the Soviet regime. I knew that they did not recognize it, did not like it, and perhaps even hated it. But I knew equally well that neither my father nor my mother had done anything that could be considered anti-Soviet or counterrevolutionary.

Early next day I went off to my grandparents. The sad news did not particularly surprise them. My grandmother, an extremely capable and practical woman, declared that it was no use crying over spilt milk, and that we must find out which prison my parents were in and arrange to send them some food.

After making a daily round of the prisons for a month we succeeded in discovering that my mother was in the Butyrky prison. My father's place of confinement remained unknown for three months. We received permission to hand in food parcels for my mother twice a month.

On the evening before the parcel was due to be delivered my grandmother would set off for the prison. All night people with bundles, bags, or knotted kerchiefs filled with food would stand about the streets and lanes around the prison in order to be among the first in the huge line that formed at six in the morning when the prison gates opened. At eight I would take my grandmother's place, and she would go home to sleep while I delivered the parcel around noon.

Standing in line by the hour, I discovered the existence in my own country of a huge, alien world, that of the prisoners. Many of those who brought parcels had had close or distant relatives in concentration camps for the last year or two. These people discussed the advantages and drawbacks of various camps like experts and talked about them in the sort of everyday tone of voice that my father had used long ago when he discussed the relative merits of holiday resorts in the Caucasus or the Crimea.

I returned to school after an absence of six weeks. I explained to the headmaster that I had been away because of the severe illness of my parents. I think that he must have guessed the nature of this illness.

My mother was released at the end of April. In mid-May we heard that my father had been sentenced by a three-man tribunal to five years in a corrective labor camp. Before he was sent away, my mother and I obtained a ten-minute interview with him.

I had trouble recognizing my father. He had become very thin. I was shocked by the expression of dumb despair and utter hopelessness on his unshaven, lined face. I do not remember what my parents talked about. Only scraps of sentences reached me. The sound of cries and sobs surrounded us in the large hall. When the prison warden shouted in a sharp voice "The time is up!" I saw, for the first time in my life, that Father's eyes were blinking and filled with tears. He seized my head in his hands, unable to put his arms around me because of the double barrier between us, bent over me and kissed me several times. Then, so that I should hear every word, he shouted: "You are no longer a child. Remember, whatever happens, that your father was an orphan, too. You will only make a way for yourself by persistence and hard work. Keep your eyes open. Look and learn. And don't do anything stupid. . . ." The terrifying prison stench rose from him.

My mother decided to follow him to Siberia. The apartment, all the furniture, and the villa were sold. I went to live with my grandfather, because it had been decided that I should enter the eighth grade.

An entirely new life began for me both at home and at school from the start of my first year in secondary school.

I had to change most of my habits when I moved to my grandfather's house. Here I no longer had my own desk, my own bookcase and shelves. I had to be content with the dining-room table for my homework, and with the window-sill for my books and my copybooks. I set about my studies eagerly. I got a card for the Lermontov Public Library. I would sit there until it closed, reading the books recommended by my teacher. It is to this time that I owe my knowledge of the Russian classics. Our master of Russian language and literature gradually disclosed, for our benefit, the treasures of our country's literature. In a fairly short time he succeeded in giving me a taste for Russian literature, and I came to love the Russian classical writers.

I was very slow indeed in making contact with my classmates. Until halfway through the school year I did not really make friends with anybody and trusted nobody with my thoughts. I let the story get around that my father had died on a mission, and that my mother had left Moscow. As eighth grade pupils we were over Pioneer age, and there was as yet no Komsomol organization in the school, so there was also no communal life there. I turned out to be the best pupil during the first and second terms and led the class.

I was often worried by the thought that I was a convict's son with all that that meant. Yet my father's arrest, his confinement in a camp, and the collapse of the easy life to which I had become accustomed, did not change my attitude to my surroundings. I knew that my father was a wholehearted enemy of the Soviet regime, and, consequently, his punishment did not seem unjust to me. I tried to be utterly objective and to find arguments that would justify the action of the penal authorities. There was only one thing to which I was unable to reconcile myself. My father had been sent to a camp not because of his negative attitude toward the regime but because he had been accused of espionage. Yet he was not, and could not have been, a spy.

At the end of the first half-year, in other words at the end of 1934, Vorobev, a permanent organizer of the Central Committee of the All-Union Lenin Young Communist League, appeared at the school and took charge of all social work. He often came to our class and talked about sports and new movies. He was an ardent hunter and would sometimes spend an entire half-hour recess telling us hunting stories. Occasionally he would start a conversation about the Komsomol. He always greeted us by shaking hands and addressed us familiarly as "thou," unlike the teachers, who always used the formal "you." We liked Vorobev and were glad to talk to him. Once, during recess, he took me by the arm in a friendly way and said: "Come and see me after classes are over if you have nothing else to do. We'll have a chat."

I went to his office after school. He welcomed me, made me sit on the sofa, and sat down beside me. I was afraid that he had asked me in so as to find out more about me and my life at home. I had therefore spent the last few classes of the day frantically trying to guess in advance the questions he might ask so as to prepare suitable replies. Vorobev, however, asked me nothing about my home. He praised my good progress, asked me what I was thinking of doing when I left school, and then said that the time had come to re-establish in the school those pupils' organizations which had been completely neglected: the school committee and the senior pupils' council. I had been a member of the school committee at the seven-year school: Vorobev probably knew this and therefore suggested that I become a member of the senior pupils' council. "If you get elected, of course," he added.

I was flattered that Vorobev had noticed me. He was the Komsomol organizer from the Central Committee of the All-Union Lenin Young Communist League, whatever you might say. His praise of my progress flattered me, his suggestion that I should become one of the seven members of the senior council, the highest self-governing student body, impressed me. I agreed.

The meeting of the pupils in the senior grades for the elections to the senior council took place with some solemnity. The seven candidates for senior council membership and Vorobev took their places around the presidium table under huge portraits of Lenin and Stalin on the stage of the great school auditorium. Vorobev opened the meeting and read the names of the Honorary Presidium, which included all the members of the Politburo of the Party Central Committee and Kosyrev, the First Secretary of the Komsomol Central Committee. This was greeted with the general applause which we automatically gave any suggestions by the chairman of a meeting of this kind. At this moment the door of the hall opened, and an unknown man came in, middle-aged, beginning to thicken, dressed in a military type tunic and boots and breeches, with the "Order of Lenin" on his chest.

When Vorobev caught sight of the newcomer, he went to the rostrum and announced: "Comrades! Allow me to introduce Comrade Saltanov, Secretary of the Komsomol Central Committee, who has just arrived at our meeting." He waited until the applause had died down and then proposed Saltanov's election to the presidium.

To the accompaniment of further applause Saltanov came up onto the stage and sat down at our presidium table. Never before had I sat at the same table with such a high dignitary. I literally devoured him with my eyes. I can remember his smooth, pink, clean-shaven cheeks which proclaimed good health and good living. In spite of his deliberately severe dress, he radiated self-satisfaction, and one could feel that one was in the presence of a man who was sure of himself and of his own success, and who knew his own value. The "Order of Lenin," a relatively rare award in the early thirties, bore witness to the government's recognition of his services.

All the candidates for the senior council, including myself, made speeches. Then Saltanov spoke in conclusion. He talked about the importance of self-government in the school and about the leading role of the Komsomol in the life of Soviet young people. Finally, he concluded with the habitual: "Long live the great friend and teacher of Soviet youth, Comrade Stalin." During his speech the cameras of *Komsomolskaya pravda* reporters flashed, and two days later an article appeared about our meeting, with pictures of the presidium. I cut out the article and the pictures and kept them for a long time.

The senior council was unanimously elected as proposed—anything else would have been unthinkable—and afterward its newly elected members showed Saltanov the school. He stopped at the school wall-newspaper board and, having read one of the items, turned to me: "It is a bad thing when words like 'guys' and 'gals' slip through into an article. . . It is rude and uncultured." I was overcome and muttered something that did not make much sense.

Then we all went to Vorobev's office. Saltanov was smoking long aromatic cigarettes; he smelt of fine scent and he said very little. He addressed Vorobev as "thou." It turned out later that he and Vorobev had been childhood friends, although Vorobev was two years younger. Before he left, Saltanov said that he was worried about the absence of a Komsomol organization in our school. He added that he would try to visit us more frequently, shook hands with everybody, and went away.

Vorobev soon afterward organized a group of senior pupils to prepare for admission to the Komsomol. They began to study its program and statutes. I took no part in the group on the excuse that I had too much work on the senior council where I had been given the job of organizing a radio installation. The truth was, of course, that I was afraid that when my background was checked for admission, it would become known that I was a convict's son, and that I would be refused election to the Komsomol. Vorobev did not particularly insist that I should be among the first to join, and it so happened that a number of my schoolmates became Komsomol members, while I remained outside.

In the spring of 1935 Vorobev told me that I must study the program and statutes of the Komsomol privately and, before final examinations, submit an application for admission. I promised to try to do this and avoided meeting Vorobev for several weeks. Finally, in desperation, I explained that I had fallen behind in mathematics and that I would not have enough time to study for my

examinations if I tried to prepare for the Komsomol at the same time. Vorobev was most displeased with me and made me promise that I would definitely enter the Komsomol at the start of the next school year. As far as I was concerned, however, that was a long while off, and I hoped to find a new reason for delay by then.

For the summer holidays, I went to see my mother in the small Siberian town of Mariinsk. She managed to obtain a two-hour interview for me with my father when I arrived.

My father was delighted beyond bounds at my arrival. He took an interest in my studies and my successes and advised me to enter a medical institute when I had finished my ten-year school. He said almost nothing about his life in the camp, apart from comparing it in passing with the old tsarist forced labor multiplied by ten.

I saw my father again twice during that summer. Our conversations were personal and gloomy. However, occasional remarks dropped by my father convinced me that he, who had never liked the Soviets, now hated them with all his heart.

I did not condemn him for this, but I did not share his feelings. I was sorry for him, because he was my father whom I loved and respected. But this feeling of pity for somebody who was really close to me still could not force me to think as he did and to abandon those views I regarded as the only correct ones.

Almost every day I saw columns of convicts going to and from work under the escort of riflemen. The emaciated appearance of these people, who were largely workers and peasants, their depressed and somber looks—how little all this resembled the newspaper cartoons of “enemies of the people.” Yet there were the real, live “enemies” in the flesh.

At the time, I was trying to find arguments by which I could justify the difference between what I saw and what Communism taught, the irreconcilability of so many of the events in the world around me with every individual's innate, most elementary concepts of justice and humanity. I could not recognize real enemies of the people in the hundreds and thousands of convicts that I had seen. It was obvious to me that these were representative people, indeed, that they were, in fact, the people.

Somewhere I raked up a formula to explain the undeserved suffering of innocent individuals: “It is better that dozens of innocent people should suffer than that one guilty person should go free.” The formula by itself was revolting in its cynicism and inhumanity, but it could explain what I had seen, even if it did not justify it. That was precisely what I needed at the time.

During my two months in Mariinsk I found out a great deal not only about the convicts' life in Siberian camps but about the native Siberian population whose standard of living differed sharply from that in Moscow. I did not analyze my impressions. I did not have any urge in those days to discover and find out more than happened to meet my eye. And I only sought arguments to justify what I had seen when I had to do so in order to retain my mental equilibrium.

I was back in Moscow before the new school year had begun. My first meeting with Vorobey, the Komsomol organizer, was most cordial. He told me about his summer vacation which he had spent with his parents in the country. He asked me about my impressions of the summer. I did not tell anyone that I had spent my vacation in Siberia.

Boris Petrovsky, a classmate of mine and the secretary of the school Komsomol cell, gave me a questionnaire for admission to the Komsomol in mid-September and told me that Vorobey had asked him to do so. I tried to get out of it by saying that I knew no Party members who would vouch for me. This got me nowhere, because Boris suggested that the history teacher and polytechnic instructor would certainly not refuse me a recommendation. There was nothing to be done.

I painfully mulled over the situation for several days. Of course, my political convictions at that time in no way prevented me from entering the Komsomol. On the contrary, membership in the Komsomol was fully in accordance with my wishes and desires. Unfortunately, however, I had built up a fictional background for myself. Now that I faced entry into the Komsomol I must either destroy this legend, as every "honest Soviet citizen" was officially expected to do, and thereby cut myself off from membership forever, or I must practice deception and risk discovery, though success would mean my becoming a Komsomol member. In the end I decided to risk it. I filled in the questionnaire and added a declaration and a summary of my life in which I stated that my father had left my mother and that I had lost all trace of him. I got the necessary recommendations from two Party members, handed all the papers to Petrovsky, and settled down in some trepidation to await the results.

I was summoned to a meeting of the school Komsomol organization in October 1955. There I was asked to give an account of my life. I was then asked a number of questions about the program and statutes of the Komsomol which I had no difficulty in answering. Finally I was unanimously accepted as a member. This, however, was not the end of the routine.

A little later, I was called to a session of the raion committee buro. Each decision to confirm a newly accepted member took only four or five minutes, because the number of candidates summoned for confirmation ran into double figures.

I do not remember any of the questions I was asked at the session of the raion committee buro. I answered them almost automatically, expecting every minute to be asked some trick question about my life. But my life summary, so it seemed, had aroused no suspicions, and, after shaking hands with the first secretary of the raion committee, I was awarded my Komsomol card.

It is difficult to give an exact description of the complex feelings that overwhelmed me during my reception into the Komsomol. I felt at any rate that the entry procedure represented a great and significant event in my young life. At the same time, all my feelings and emotions were dominated by a paralyzing, almost panic-stricken fear of discovery. I was afraid that if anyone were to check my life story carefully, the truth would be discovered. It would then not only

be revealed that I was a convict's son, but I would be accused of having tried to "creep into the Komsomol by deceit." That would result in my being both refused membership and expelled from the school.

The fear of discovery stayed with me for a long time, even after I had received my membership card. The anguish and worry that resulted from this influenced my behavior. I tried to behave in such a way that I was in no way conspicuous among my fellow Komsomol members. I tried to put a brake on my activities so as not to achieve distinction, since this might entail a stricter check on my background. I felt no hostility toward the Soviet regime or the Communist system, yet from the moment of my entry into the Komsomol, I regarded myself in my heart of hearts as a sort of solitary conspirator who might be exposed at any moment.

A close friendship developed between us all in the ninth grade. The whole class was fused into a friendly young family. Relations between boys and girls were very healthy. There were occasional cases of young love, but these always remained platonic. Yet, in this atmosphere of mutual trust and comradeship, I was the one who had to conceal a worry which I dared not discuss with anyone. My friends knew nothing of this, and, although the necessity of keeping the secret had not the slightest effect on my relations with them, it undoubtedly had an effect on me and on my entire disposition.

It was only much later that I discovered that I was not alone in this, and that several of my schoolmates had also been forced at the time to conceal the fact that close relatives of theirs had been convicted of similar things.

For practical purposes, my entry into the Komsomol did not change my life at school. This, in any case, was centered, not in the Komsomol, but in the classroom with its fellowship of young people bound together by common interests and ambitions. In spite of the fact that nobody organized it from above, a spirit of healthy communal life reigned in our class.

We almost invariably went to the movies as a group. We all liked the same songs, usually taken from favorite movies or comic operas. Time and time again we saw certain of our favorite foreign movies: *Peter*, *Little Mother*, *Sous les Toits de Paris*, *Katerina*, *Modern Times*, *City Lights*. We did not like all Soviet films. Those we preferred were: *Chapaev*, *We from Kronstadt*, *The Gay Lads*, *The Circus*, *Volga-Volga*, and *The Rebel Girl*. We were all very fond of literature, and one book after another became the current craze, although never, of course, the assigned books on the school program. The books were passed from hand to hand and sometimes even torn into sections so that more than one person could read at the same time. The most popular ones were Hasek's *The Good Soldier Schweik*, *The Twelve Chairs* and *The Golden Calf* by Ilf and Petrov, Hemmingway's stories, Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*, Feuchtwanger's *The Oppenheim Family*, and a number of others.

Recordings of Vertinsky and Leshchenko had a special place in our lives. The father of one of the girls, a high official in a Moscow institution, had an almost complete set of these records. His daughter used to smuggle them out



to the house where we happened to be meeting. Those meetings had a slightly conspiratorial flavor. They were attended by Komsomol members and non-members alike, but everyone kept quiet, and Vorobev did not even suspect that his Komsomol members were "corrupting themselves with decadent, emigre music."

We often arranged evening parties in friends' apartments and danced to phonograph records. We did not dance Russian folk dances but West European tangos, foxtrots and rumbas. We celebrated every revolutionary festival in two separate ways—officially by attending a demonstration, and unofficially by an evening dance and occasionally some games, not excluding the old bourgeois game of flirtation.

Nearly half of our class took part in the drama circle run by the popular Moscow actor Ganshin, a sensitive artist and a gifted director. We put on two plays, sparing no efforts over the production, going through agonies with the staging, and rehearsing endlessly. At any rate, our productions undoubtedly had a higher standard of acting than those of professional actors that I later saw on the boards of wretched provincial theaters.

Since, in addition, the curriculum of our secondary school was very comprehensive, and our teachers tried to impart to us more knowledge than was demanded by the set standard, it can safely be said that our school life was extremely full.

All these personal and academic activities existed on a plane apart from that of the Komsomol organization. As I very soon discovered, the activities of the latter were confined to holding routine general meetings. These were held not more than once a month. They were so dull and monotonous that we Komsomol members regarded attendance as a form of obligatory Komsomol service. Let me give an example of what I can remember about them.

In the evening of the appointed day, when afternoon classes were over, the school Komsomol members would assemble in one of the empty classrooms. I should add, by the way, that Vorobev was inclined toward ceremony and attempted to make it a rule that meetings should be held only in the school auditorium; this was unsuccessful, however, because the Komsomol members were attached to their classrooms and felt thoroughly ill at ease in the auditorium. Usually there were no late comers, although we all regarded Komsomol meetings as a tiresome duty. It was not the meetings themselves that attracted the members, but the desire to meet friends from other classes and the opportunity to take the Komsomol girls home after the meetings.

The meetings were opened by Boris Petrovsky. Vorobev was always present at the meetings, but he did not interfere. I later heard that he had a talk with Petrovsky after each meeting to point out mistakes that had been made. The presidium was elected. At this stage everybody did what he could to avoid the doubtful honor of being elected either chairman or secretary, since that involved writing the minutes afterwards. The agenda was then read aloud. It usually included the following main sections: a discussion of some current political

event in the country, the Party, or the Komsomol, such as an important government decree or a resolution of the Central Committee of the Party or the Komsomol; a discussion of current developments in the school Komsomol organization—the growth of the organization's political education work, scholastic progress, Pioneer activities; and organization questions—new members, discussion of individual misdemeanors, and the appointment of individuals to assignments. The agenda was always accepted without discussion or amendment.

Vorobev always spoke on items in the first section. The resolutions concerning them were proposed by a member of the cell buro, but they had always been drafted in advance at the preliminary buro meetings, and Vorobev was invariably their author. He zealously saw to it that there should be no political lapses in the organization for which he was responsible. He knew the right style to use and the appropriate slogans of the moment, something that was altogether beyond an ordinary Komsomol pupil. These resolutions were always agreed on unanimously and without amendments. Speeches concerning items in the second section were left to Petrovsky. Occasionally the meeting heard reports from members who had been given some particular task. Then the meetings came to life to some extent, particularly when the speaker did not know what he was talking about. This usually happened with Komsomol members who were responsible for political education work; in other words, for current affairs circles and for the wall-newspaper. The jokes would begin: "Blame it all on the size of the school schedule," or, "Say you are a donkey, not a camel, and that you cannot carry the wall-newspaper." During the evaluation of the work everybody would shout different things: "Call the work good, satisfactory, excellent!" This confusion of voices was not meant for the speaker, but for the Komsomol work about which he was speaking.

Questions connected with the admittance of new members made for the liveliest meetings. I cannot tell why most of the pupils applied for Komsomol membership. Quite unquestionably, though, every rejection meant a great personal affront to the applicant and, for some, even the collapse of all their plans. Yet we who had only recently passed through the same procedure and experienced these anxious moments, often forgot what refusal might mean. Some of us became, without realizing it, petty tyrants who tormented the entrants with perverse questions. We did this not because we wished to laugh at the victim, but rather because of the boredom we had gone through during the previous two and a half hours. Let it be said to the honor of our organization that there were always a few Komsomol members ready to cross swords with the ardent "investigators." It was precisely these exchanges between the "investigators" and the "advocates" which lent some life to our meetings.

Once Vorobev had organized the school cell and succeeded in raising membership in the school to the figure planned, he calmed down and did not burden us with any special Komsomol tasks. He was a good companion but was too ambitious and formalistic. The Komsomol, obviously, only interested him as a step to higher things.

There was no initiative from below to foster Komsomol activity, and on the rare occasions when it did manifest itself, this was only because it was necessary to get two or three hundred rubles from the school director to pay for the next evening entertainment in the school or to repair the stage. Although we had a Komsomol wall-newspaper, it appeared at very irregular intervals. Nobody read it, because everybody knew in advance that it contained nothing worth reading. Anyone who was given an article to write for it would rewrite a piece from *Komsomolskaya pravda*.

The two years spent in the school Komsomol organization had hardly any influence on the formation of my outlook or my character. Probably the only difference between us Komsomol pupils and our non-Komsomol friends lay in the fact that they were not obliged to attend Komsomol meetings. We had no privileges. Our right to wear the Komsomol KIM badge carried no duties with it, except for the regular payment of dues. Even Boris Petrovsky thought his only duty was to see that all members attended the meetings and paid their dues.

The absence of "Komsomol enthusiasm" among us was in no way the expression of any sort of opposition tendencies. These did not exist. It was far more that there was nothing in the life of the school Komsomol organization to inspire or inflame us. Nevertheless, we read articles in *Komsomolskaya pravda* about the heroism of Komsomol members in winter work or in the construction of the new town of Komsomolsk-on-Amur, and believed that the activities of some Komsomol organizations could, indeed, bear comparison with the romantic epics of Komsomol members during the Civil War. N. Ostrovsky's *How the Steel Was Tempered*, which was published about this time, made a great impression on us, although we did not consider it an artistic lesson in living our lives but, rather, an interesting and occasionally engrossing saga about Komsomol deeds that had passed into history.

It is worth stressing that we Komsomol young people had one interesting characteristic. Despite the fact that we treated our presence in the Komsomol merely as the observance of an accepted form of Soviet social life, according to which good pupils had to be Komsomol members, at the same time, we were punctilious where the so-called "Komsomol word of honor" was concerned. If any one of us gave his "honest Komsomol word" in the course of telling a story, one could be absolutely certain that the story was true. I do not know of a single case in which either my friends or I broke our "Komsomol word" once we had given it.

As for the relations between Komsomol members at school, they differed very little from the relations of ordinary classmates; if anything, they lacked the same intimacy and spontaneity because sharing studies and common interests in class brought pupils together more quickly and effectively than common membership in the Komsomol.

The existence of our school cell was not ruffled by any internal events, upheavals, or conflicts. About February 1936, however, we were forced, at a closed meeting, to face a problem which made a strong impression on us—the question of the expulsion of Somov, one of our comrades in the ninth grade.

Somov was an instructor in model aircraft construction and gliding. He was the only one in the school who had taken a Civil Defense gliding course at Tushino during the previous summer.

The Komsomol organizer, Vorobev, informed the meeting that Somov had been arrested three days before by the NKVD. This was a bombshell. Vorobev did not tell us the reason for the arrest. Instead, he spent a quarter of an hour repeating newspaper clichés about the incursions of enemies of the people, diversionists and fascists, and the necessity of intensifying our vigilance.

We sat in silence, without raising our eyes. When Vorobev had finished and asked us to express an opinion, nobody asked to speak. Then, to save the situation, Boris Petrovsky, agitated and flushed with either emotion or shame, rose and in a stutter proposed that the meeting adopt a resolution to expel Somov from the Komsomol. Vorobev put Petrovsky's motion to the vote. "Who is for the proposal?" he asked. Without looking at each other, we all raised our hands. "Who is opposed?" said Vorobev for the sake of form, certain that nobody would vote against the exclusion of an enemy of the people. And suddenly, breaking all custom and habit, a solitary voice was raised: "I am opposed."

It was Sasha Vladavets, a brilliant, nearsighted lad, the school poet and son of a professor at one of the Moscow institutes. For us, his statement was an even more unexpected bombshell.

"I cannot, I have not the right to vote for the expulsion of a comrade whose crime I know nothing about," Vladavets said simply, rising from his chair.

"So you are not content with the fact that Somov has been arrested? Are you perhaps trying to say that the NKVD arrests people for no good reason?" asked Vorobev in great agitation.

"No, I am not saying that," Vladavets answered quietly, "but I know Somov well and I am inclined to think that he has been arrested by mistake. In any case, we have no right to decide the question of our comrade's expulsion in such haste. We must get the NKVD to let us have proof of Somov's crimes."

This went beyond the bounds of possibility. The thought even flashed through my mind that Vladavets had lost his mind. Vorobev stated in menacing tones that he would speak to Vladavets "alone and elsewhere," and declared the meeting adjourned.

After Komsomol meetings we usually gathered at each others' homes, but on this occasion each of us tried to shake off his friends and be on his own as soon as possible. I thought about what had happened all the way home and deep into the night. I did not believe that Somov had committed any crime. What crime could a sixteen-year-old schoolboy commit? And so I did not try to find the grounds for my comrade's arrest, but tried to establish some reason for my attitude towards the episode. I tried to find some justification for our general behavior and for my personal action at the meeting where we had voted to expel a fellow Komsomol member without really knowing the reason why.

However hard I tried, I could find no justification for my action. At the same time it hurt me to realize that there was nothing else I could have done. It

seemed to me that the very senselessness of Vladavets' behavior only went to show that the rest of us had behaved sensibly. This was the first time that I found my reason in conflict with my conscience.

A week later Somov reappeared at school. It turned out that he had been arrested at the station as he was about to buy a ticket for Tushino. His resemblance to someone else and his military pattern Civil Defense uniform worn under an ordinary overcoat had attracted the attention of an NKVD policeman at the station.

Somov had no trouble in getting the buro of the raion committee to reverse the decision of the local organization. Vladavets became in our eyes a knight in shining armor instead of a lunatic poet, and Vorobev's authority was severely shaken. An event that occurred some time after the "Somov case" finally undermined our confidence in Komsomol organizer Vorobev. This is what happened.

One night, to pass away the time at a sketching class, a friend and I decided to "publish" a satirical sheet called "A Stitch in the Side." By the end of the lesson the sheet was ready. My friend then jumped up on a bench and read out our creation, after which the sheet was passed from hand to hand. Then and there the whole class decided to continue publication, and for some months, with the active support of our friends, the sheet appeared regularly in the class. We criticized everything and everybody with the mercilessness of youth, but were careful to keep clear of political topics. We realized that bringing out a typed sheet without the approval of the school authorities and the Komsomol organizer was a doubtful business at best, and we therefore kept its publication strictly secret. Even Petrovsky pretended to know nothing. A youthful wish to boast, however, led us to tell him and Vorobev about our "newspaper" after a Komsomol meeting. We thought that Vorobev was "one of the boys," at least, and that he could be trusted in small things. When he had read the latest number of "A Stitch in the Side" and stopped laughing, Vorobev asked us to let him have it to show to his friends. Foreseeing no harm in this, we let him have it.

Several days later a special Komsomol meeting was called. The agenda included the question of corrupting influences in the ninth grade, which had taken the form of distracting Komsomol members from current political problems in favor of everyday trivialities. Vorobev made mincemeat of our sheet. He described it as "a dangerous phenomenon which drew the attention of Komsomol members away from the great problems of Socialist construction and dragged them down into a stinking mire of the prosaic." One could feel that Vorobev was repeating somebody else's words and not expressing his own ideas. This turned out to be the truth of the matter. As we later discovered, Vorobev had attempted to boast about our initiative at the Komsomol Central Committee and had been severely censured for "relaxing political vigilance." Now he was trying to make good his error and was taking it out on us.

Luckily the affair ended with only a public reprimand for us, and we did not even get a note in our personal files, the lightest punishment in the Komsomol. Saltanov referred to our sheet in his speech at the oblast Komsomol conference. He even quoted a few lines and blasted such "initiative from below"

as a manifestation of "crass, uncultured behavior." The incident of "A Stitch in the Side" served as a most serious warning to me to do nothing without considering all possible consequences beforehand.

I was elected chairman of the senior council at a general meeting of the ninth grade. Saltanov put in another appearance at this meeting. This was his third visit to our school. By this time my attitude toward him had changed. I no longer saw him as a leader. He had become an ordinary mortal, though still an extremely important person. I now talked to him as simply as to Vorobev, and only thought out rather more carefully what I had to say. Saltanov himself did not stand on ceremony with us, perhaps even deliberately so in order to convince us that he was merely an older comrade and no more.

Great upheavals were going on in the country during my time in the secondary school and in the school's Komsomol organization up to the spring of 1937. The trials of "enemies of the people" took first place among current events. The accused were people who until quite recently had held the highest Soviet government and Party posts. We had two attitudes toward these trials: an official attitude expressed in the holding of general school meetings and special Komsomol meetings where appropriate resolutions were passed condemning the enemies of the people, and an unofficial attitude which depended on whatever the individual happened to think or feel.

My feelings did not appear to differ in any way from those of my schoolmates and fellow Komsomol members. I felt depressed, uncertain, and divided in my own mind. I found it hard to believe that people about whose actions and heroic deeds songs had been written only the previous day turn overnight into vicious enemies of the Communist system, into criminals and murderers. I followed the course of the trials attentively in the press and could not understand what had driven such people as Bukharin, Zinoviev, Pyatakov, and others to confess to crimes and speak about them as if they were the prosecuting attorneys rather than the defendants in the case. We did not mention the trials in private conversation. There was no point in repeating what was said in the papers and we were afraid of discussing the subject in order to find a logical explanation, for such discussions might lead us into political byways from which we could have trouble finding our way back.

As a sign of the troubled times, my uncle Moroz shot himself in the spring of 1936. I had visited my uncle's family fairly often after my mother's departure for Siberia. When my uncle was at home I used to discuss a variety of topics with him on an adult level. Mostly, though, I would listen to his reminiscences of the Civil War. It seemed to me at times that he was escaping from reality into memories of the past. On one occasion he started talking about my father and told me that he was an intelligent man and probably had been arrested by mistake. He advised me not to think about it, because I had my whole future still before me.

Then, one night, a shot rang out. A note found on my uncle's desk was destroyed by my aunt, and it was only later that my grandmother told me what it

had contained. Moroz had written that his faith in Communism had been destroyed by Stalin, and that his suicide would save his family from the persecution which had been meted out to the families of those of his Party friends who had been declared "enemies of the people."

My uncle's suicide depressed me tremendously, not just because a suicide in the family is depressing in itself, but because the voluntary renunciation of life by the man who had been to me the model of a stable, unshakeable Leninist and an intelligent Communist once more confirmed that there was something terribly wrong with the prevailing situation.

The suicide of Moroz drove me to agonizing and prolonged meditation about the sense of what was happening around me, and about my attitude to these events. The impressions I had received in Butyrky prison and at the camp at Mariinsk were reborn. For the first time in my life I had to face the question: am I, personally, for or against the system that dominates my country. My experience in life was still too narrow and limited to allow me to answer this question directly. When, however, I had gone over in my memory all that I had experienced, felt, and seen, I was deeply and acutely aware that the system, or rather what it had become in recent years, was unjust. This injustice was only very vaguely and unconvincingly redeemed in my mind by the distant prospects of socialism to which Party propaganda promised to lead the country. Obviously my faith was still alive, although it had been shaken and had lost its former strength.

Stalin himself stamped out the members of this faith in his address to the Seventh Congress of Soviets, when he declared that the foundations of socialism had been built in the USSR. Nothing could induce me to accept the claim that a socialist society had been created, since this contradicted all the conceptions of socialism which were gradually taking shape in my mind in the course of studying and mastering the basic principles of Communist theory.

Komsomol activity in the tenth grade was exactly the same as in the class below and was also limited to regular attendance at meetings. Vorobev made an attempt to organize Komsomol circles for the study of Party history and the Constitution of the USSR, in other words circles similar to those that were sprouting up like mushrooms in every Komsomol organization involved in productive work. We succeeded in demonstrating the absurdity of such a proposal in so far as the school was concerned, as its curriculum already included Party history and the study of the Constitution.

In the spring of 1937, before the graduation examination began, all Komsomol members were called to the raion committee. Here we were informed that it was our Komsomol duty as soon as we had finished the ten-year school to enter naval or air force academies.

We all dreamed of going on to higher education as soon as we had been graduated, and the prospect of becoming military men for life pleased nobody. But there was nothing to be done. We had to set off first to the raion, then to the

city, and finally to the oblast recruiting and medical boards. The raion and city boards rejected ninety percent of the candidates to their great and unconcealed delight. It must be admitted that the overwhelming majority of those on the Komsomol recruitment list malingered as hard as they could when they came before the medical boards; they complained of imaginary pains when filling in questionnaires, they invented hereditary diseases, and many successfully simulated nearsightedness and partial deafness. I did not attempt to mangle and to my great sorrow was declared fit to serve in the Air Force.

At the end of August I was called before the recruiting commission. The members of the commission, among them a secretary of the Moscow Komsomol Committee, asked me a number of extremely tricky questions concerning the background of my parents and, more important, their recent past. After an interview lasting half an hour during which, to my surprise, I managed to keep my wits about me, I was allowed to go. Two days later my papers were returned with no explanation.

Because of the Komsomol recruiting campaign I had lost my opportunity of entering an institute, and I now found myself with nothing to do. After talking things over with my relatives, I decided to leave for Siberia to find a job and help support my mother and to return the following year in time to enter an institute. I went to Barnaul and presented myself at the Altai Krai Department of National Education, where I declared that I had come from Moscow in order to get to know my own country and take an active part in the construction of socialism in the outlying regions. I was very well received and appointed a teacher at an "incomplete" secondary school in Slavgorod. Thus, without any special preparation, I became a teacher at the age of barely eighteen.

I soon grew accustomed to my new position and even acquired the reputation at the raion department of being one of their best teachers. This was hardly surprising; the shortage of teachers in Siberia after the arrests of 1934-37 was truly catastrophic.

I had not taken the trouble of signing off the Komsomol roll before leaving Moscow. I now had to write to Moscow and request that my personal file be sent to the Slavgorod Raion Komsomol Committee. The file arrived. When I signed myself in I made the acquaintance of Bobrov, the raion committee secretary. He had become interested in the strange Muscovite who had given up the capital for life in the depths of the provinces.

This acquaintance has left me with a memory that is not particularly pleasant. Bobrov was a type that one often meets in Party and Komsomol establishments. He was a colorless individual. A young fellow educated in a provincial factory training school, his rapid career had clearly turned his head. He felt that he was a leader on a raion scale and stressed this not only by his off-hand manner with other human beings, but also in his dress which was modelled on that of kraï and even All-Union leaders. Bobrov had no great intellectual capacity, nor did he have the advantage of a good education or of practical experience. Like the majority of Party and Komsomol officials of his type, he covered up his defi-



ciencies by a knowledge of the necessary quotations from Stalin and an ability to produce on all occasions, whether relevant or not, great truths extracted from the Moscow press.

Bobrov asked what had induced me to leave Moscow and come to Slavgorod. His question hardly suppressed his unfeigned astonishment at the illogicality of such an action. In reply, I delivered a well balanced Communist tirade, solidly based ideologically and displaying my fairly deep knowledge and correct understanding of the Party line. My five-minute tirade, full of expressions such as "a sacred duty to the Soviet homeland and to the Party," visibly had a devastating effect on Bobrov. My words convinced him that he was dealing either with a man singularly devoted to the Party and the Komsomol, or with an "idealistic idiot" who needed watching.

When I left Bobrov I could not suppress a feeling of disgust at myself. I was only able to regain my balance at the thought that the duplicity which I had been forced to practice was just a means of self-defense in the struggle for existence. I need not say that the highflown words that I had used to Bobrov bore no resemblance to my real attitude.

I subsequently met Bobrov only on rare occasions and had no personal contacts with him at all. At the end of that winter he was arrested and declared an enemy of the people together with a number of other leading Party and Komsomol officials.

Things turned out to be rather more difficult for me, however, in the local Komsomol organization.

The school organization consisted of a few Komsomol pupils and teachers, the latter being in the majority. Fourteen out of eighteen teachers in the school were members or candidate members. The secretary of the organization was Yakov Zakharias, a German from the neighboring German raion of the Altai Krai. He had been graduated from the Barnaul Pedagogical Institute and taught mathematics. He was a shrewd and careful careerist, one of the few Germans in his raion who had escaped being sent to a concentration camp.

Zakharias began to study me carefully from a distance. He obviously did not believe the high-sounding phrases with which I had succeeded in silencing Bobrov, and at every convenient occasion he would try to bring me out into the open by a sudden question or crack. He had no compromising documents or background information about me and therefore did not attempt any definite move against me. He merely confined himself to conjectures which were probably not far from the truth. However, as he could not be sure of the correctness of his guesses, he did not take the risk of attacking me directly. I might, for instance, have been sent to Slavgorod from Moscow for a purpose, but he was ready to exploit every opportunity to put me in an embarrassing position. A secret struggle began between Zakharias and me, and I had to exert every effort not to give away my real attitude. The opposition between us was noticed by the other Komsomol members, who, although they did not like Zakharias, tried not to establish too close contacts with me. I do not know how this struggle would have ended, had Zakharias not been transferred to a village seven-year school whose director had been arrested.

The activity of the Komsomol cell at Slavgorod was not restricted to meetings only, as it had been in Moscow. All Komsomol members had to do "social tasks" and to work in the circles studying the history of the All-Union Communist Party and the Constitution. These tasks were of various kinds, but one of the chief ones was agitation work. Each Komsomol agitator was assigned a couple of streets where he had to carry out agitation work according to a plan and explain the political meaning of the current Party campaigns.

Before the elections to the Supreme Soviet, we Komsomol agitators had to give up all our free evenings explaining to our sectors "The Position Regarding the Elections to the Supreme Soviet." This was an extremely dull and distasteful duty. One had to go from house to house and bore people who were already worn out from their day's work. I treated my assignment with some indifference and reduced my entire agitation work to reading the "Position" out loud. I initiated no discussions, because I was tired of the endless repetitions of the same official phrases, and also because I noticed that my listeners treated me with ill-concealed unfriendliness and put up with me merely as a necessary and unavoidable evil.

I was shown a high mark of confidence during the electoral campaign by being appointed to speak at the pre-election meeting at which the candidates for the Supreme Soviet were to be nominated. Before the meeting I was summoned to the raion Party committee, where the chief of the propaganda and agitation department had assembled twelve or fifteen teachers, employees and workers from local undertakings. These were the people to whom the raion committee was going to give the role of "orators from the body of the electorate" at the meeting. Each of us was given the task of proposing one or another of the candidates. Only one of these was a local candidate. All the rest were Party and government leaders, headed by Stalin. It was my lot to propose the candidacy of V. M. Molotov. I was nervous before the meeting. This nervousness had little to do with that of a man about to speak for the first time before an audience of a few hundred people. No, it was the emotion of someone who felt that he was about to take part in a rigged game and who had not the slightest chance of refusing to do so.

At that time I used to think fairly frequently of my future and in so doing reflected on my recent past. As a result, I came to the conclusion that the Komsomol card had brought me nothing but worries, unpleasantness, and a permanent sense of danger, and that it would probably never give me anything else. The attempts to push me forward, which had begun in Slavgorod and which were due to my being far more developed and literate politically than the majority of local Komsomol members, really frightened me. I knew full well that even the slightest political advancement for me must inevitably lead to an exposure of my background, and that, under the prevailing spy-mania and the uncovering of innumerable enemies of the people, such an exposure might bring about not only my expulsion from the Komsomol, but even my arrest.

During my stay in Slavgorod my attitude toward current events continued to change and to lead me away from my faith in the correctness of the path that

the country was following. If my faith in Communism had been severely shaken by what I had seen and experienced in Moscow, here in Slavgorod doubt was replaced by certainty that everything which went on around me, and in which I myself was forced to take part, corresponded neither with my beliefs nor with my wishes. I had been shattered in Moscow by the assertion that socialism had been constructed. And here in Siberia I was nauseated to see the contradiction between the theory and the practice of Communism. My conviction that the system was profoundly unjust was strengthened here in Siberia, and I began to doubt not only the possibility of building a Communist society by means of the methods then in use, but even the very foundations of Communist theory.

The wretched condition of the common people had an extremely depressing effect on me. An episode to illustrate the "state of prosperity" of the Soviet population comes to my mind. On passing the store of the State Publishing House, I was surprised to see a long line of kolkhoz women standing at the door. My astonishment increased when I discovered that the women were buying whole packets of maps which by some chance had arrived in large quantities in Slavgorod. This astonishment changed to bitter resentment for my people when I discovered that these maps were being bought for the thin calico on which they were mounted, and which was to be used to make shirts.

The spring of 1938 was approaching. I put in an application to be released from my job in order to continue my education. I set about studying hard in preparation for the entrance examination at an institute. I very often pondered how I might painlessly and safely get rid of my Komsomol card.

A Komsomol member I knew happened to tell me that some months before a friend of his had been expelled from the Komsomol for failure to pay his membership dues and had recently been re-admitted. A plan was immediately born in my mind: automatic expulsion from the Komsomol for failing to pay dues would be the easiest and most certain way of freeing myself from the dangers connected with membership. Having taken this decision, I began to fall behind in my payments, although it was not easy to invent reasons for my penniless condition.

The school year came to an end. There were no Komsomol meetings during the summer, and I managed to leave for Moscow to enter an institute without signing off and without paying up my dues. I successfully passed the entrance examination, and, by September 1, I had become a student of the Sergo Ordzhonikidze Engineering and Economic Institute in Moscow.

I told the secretary of the Institute organization that I had been dropped from the Komsomol for failure to pay my dues. The secretary retorted that this was a trifling matter, and that I must be reinstated as a Komsomol member. All that was necessary for this purpose was to make a declaration to that effect. During the winter, after three or four reminders from the secretary, I informed him that I had decided to prepare for admission to the Party, and that there was therefore no point in my rejoining the Komsomol. Needless to say I had no intention of applying for admittance to the Party, but this provided the most logical explanation of my position.

Thus my three years of Komsomol membership came to an end. To cease being a Komsomol member was a great weight off my mind. I was freed from all the invisible but keenly felt shackles that had not only impeded me but also forced me to live in continual fear of detection.

The rest of my life did not go as I had planned it. I was drafted and put through a short officers' training course. As a lieutenant, I was sent to Estonia which was still at that time a capitalist state in which Russian garrisons were stationed by agreement. Before war broke out with Germany I had time to become acquainted with life abroad, thus strengthening the convictions I already held. I was at the front from the very beginning of the war and was taken prisoner in the middle of 1942. I survived despite the inhuman conditions in prison camp.

In 1943 I joined the Russian Liberation Army. I did not do this to save my life; the conditions of my imprisonment had somewhat improved by then. I did it because of my deeply held belief that it is every man's duty to fight Communism, "even if with the devil, against Communism," as the saying goes.